The Mole Creek Pack Track Between Central and Western Tasmania

Peter Brown,
B. Met (Hons), M.B.A., Grad.Dip.App.Sc.

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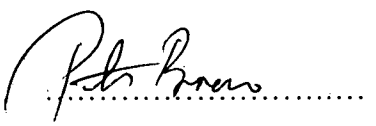

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a pack track made in the late 1890s to tap the emerging mineral wealth of the isolated West Coast of Tasmania. It was built as part of a parochial conflict over access to the West Coast which focused largely on railways, which has now been called the railway wars. The Mole Creek Track was surveyed and built as a sop to northern Tasmanian interests, as were tracks in southern Tasmania. As well as its historical interest the Mole Creek Track is remarkable in that it largely survives as a physical artefact.

In keeping with the practice of the day, a professional surveyor, Edward George Innes, determined the practicality of a route for this track using skills that are little understood today. The standards that he set for the route were much more rigorous than those of the pioneering bushmen who knew the country. This difference in approaches led to conflict within his survey party and within the local community.

The Mole Creek Track was built by day labourers, even the overseers were on day rates, although they all worked under the general supervision of the Public Works Department. The overseers, chiefly Richard Broomhall and Henry Coleman, were essential to the construction of the track because they determined how it was built based on their experience, rather than written instructions. The track-cutters who made up their work gangs were drawn from both the Mole Creek and Rosebery areas and brought different skills and expectations to the work. A major aim of the thesis is to document the effects of this through a combination of field surveys, excavation and archival work.

The Mole Creek Track was considered to be largely lost but by employing a combination of research methods it has now been located for much of its length. Based on the results of this research the thesis argues that the remains of the track have considerable cultural heritage value but neither it, nor any other track, has been listed under Tasmanian heritage legislation. Even though much of the track lies within the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park — its cultural heritage values have been degraded and continue to be threatened by high visitor numbers on sections of its route now taken up by some of the Overland Track and the Arm River Track. Conducting a cultural heritage assessment based on a New Zealand model would provide the basis to manage the over-used sections, and the 'lost' sections before they are rediscovered by significant numbers of walkers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my supervisors Dr Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Professor Tom Dunning. Also the assistance of the staff at Mineral Resources Tasmania (especially Greg Dickens), Archives Office of Tasmania, Launceston Reference Library, National Archives of Australia (Hobart), Launceston Community History (Ross Smith) are gratefully acknowledged. My walking companion and Tullah historian Greg Blake has been a great source of information, enthusiasm and friendship. Archaeologists don't come more hardy or helpful than Anne McConnell. It is to Nic Haygarth that I owe the greatest debt, excelsior historian, provider of helpful information and critique and, I am pleased to say, friend. The person who has endured the most, my partner Christa Moch, deserves heartfelt thanks for putting up with a life that revolved around archives offices, bushwalks and long periods preparing this thesis.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

AOT	Archives Office of Tasmania
CM-LSCNP	Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park
CRAs	Comprehensive Regional Assessments
DIA	Deloraine Improvement Association
EBR	Emu Bay Railway
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
GPS	Global Positioning System
JPPP	Journals and Printed Papers of Parliament
LSD	Lands and Survey Department
MCZMPEC	Mole Creek and Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Company
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
NWDRA	North and West Direct Route Association
PWD	Public Works Department
PWS	Parks and Wildlife Service
QVMAG	Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston
RFA	Regional Forestry Agreement
RNE	Register of the National Estate
TMAG	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
ZDH	Zeehan and Dundas Herald

GLOSSARY

Benched track: A track formed into a cross slope by excavating into the slope to form a level path.

Brush corduroy: Corduroy made with small round timber either from branches of trees or bushes.

Corduroy: Timber laid transversely to the direction of travel of a track to form a solid surface over soft ground.

Culvert: An earth covered simple beam bridge across a stream or water-course.

Deck: Surface of culvert or bridge that provides support to walkers.

Grade: The amount of elevation change between two points over a given distance expressed either as a ratio or as a percentage (metres change in elevation for every 100 horizontal metres, commonly known as "rise over run"). A track that rises 1 vertical metre in 10 horizontal metres has a grade of 1 in 10 or 10% grade. A grade of 1 in 1 or 100% would have an angle of 45°.

Heavy corduroy: Corduroy made with hand-split timber planks.

Sideling: Describes a track which is angled across the face of a slope to reduce the grade of the track. The track is often benched into the slope.

Track: Pedestrian access way on natural ground or fill.

Ford: A crossing of a water course - creek, river or stream - by forming a solid bottom which is shallow enough to allow a safe passage during normal water flow

METRIC CONVERSION

The imperial units were used in the original documentation for the construction and maintenance of the track, and will be used throughout this thesis. Metric, SI, units were used by the author during field work and archaeological excavations, but converted to imperial units to allow direct comparison.

80 chains	=	1 mile
66 feet	=	1 chain
3 feet	=	1 yard
12 inches	=	1 foot
1 mile	=	1.609 kilometres
1 chain	=	20.12 metres
1 yard	=	0.914 metres
1 foot	=	0.3048 metres
1 inch	=	25.4 millimetres

MONETARY

Currency at the time of the construction of the track was pounds, shillings and pence. While this can be converted to dollars and cents, the value of money changes with time.

20 shillings (s)	=	1 pound (£)
12 pence (d)	=	1 shilling (s)
1 pound (£)	=	2 dollars ($)
1 shilling (s)	=	10 cents (c)
1 penny (d)	=	1 cent (c)

INTRODUCTION

The Mole Creek Track, almost universally called the Innes Track, is well-known to the 8,000 to 9,000 bushwalkers and tourists walking the Overland Track from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair each year.[1] The literature on the Overland Track says that south from Lake Windermere, past Mount Pelion West and on to the Pelion Plains it follows part of the historic Innes Track. It also says that it was surveyed and cut in 1896 by surveyor EG Innes and a small party of men for a railway line to link the West Coast with northern Tasmania. Stock were said to be driven to emerging towns and mines of the remote West Coast.[2] Walkers find the track cut deep into the side of Mount Pelion West to make a broad walking path and remnants of old timber bridges lie under newer replacements. The Arm River Track, which is also called the Innes Track, joins the Overland Track at the Pelion Plains. It is a convenient way of reaching the centre of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park and it too has reminders that it is an old track.

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1 Parks & Wildlife Service, Recreation - The Overland Track, http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/tracknotes/overland.html (Accessed July 6, 2005).

2 There are many guide-books, magazine articles and web-pages dedicated to the Overland Track. The most recent publication, *Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park, Map and Notes*, 2010, gives a concise list of the history of the Innes Track, however, the 2006 *The Overland Track, One walk, many journeys* is more circumspect about the Innes Track and many claims (such as in *Map and Notes*) that appeared in earlier editions have been removed. The most popular guide book for the Overland Track by Siseman and Chapman has similar information to the Map and Notes, as does a recent competitor into this market, Sprawson.
Parks and Wildlife Service, *The Overland Track – One walk, Many journeys'*, (2006): 36;
Parks and Wildlife Service, *The Overland Track, A Walkers Notebook*, (1996): 24;
Parks and Wildlife Service, *Cradle Mountain- Lake St Clair National Park, Map and Notes*, (Information and Land Services, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, 2010);
John Siseman and John Chapman, *Cradle Mountain National Park*, 2nd ed. (Northcote: Brunswick, 1984): 58;
Warwick Sprawson, *The Overland Track,* (Red Dog Books, Fitzroy, 2011): 68-69.

The Innes Track had enough historic significance to be listed on the Register of the National Estate (RNE), although this in itself brings no heritage protection.[3] It gained more practical protection from being largely within national park and conservation zones controlled by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. The entry in the RNE, tells much the same story as Overland Track guidebooks and Parks and Wildlife Service literature. For a bushwalker with a historic interest, the most accessible primary information is the report by Surveyor Innes, which makes compelling reading. Innes told of thick forests, bad weather, flooded streams and illness all overcome with a stoic resilience worthy of nineteenth century explorers. The report is full of information and understated drama mixed with an admiration of the beauty of the countryside. He ended his report by declaring that the country around Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff is some of the most beautiful in the state and that it should 'prove an attraction for tourists' – a comment that would generate a wry smile from our historically inclined bushwalker.[4] It is the beauty of the country that attracts the walkers and tourists, and thoughts of railways cutting across this landscape are quickly banished. The country is stunning natural heritage, which overwhelms its cultural heritage. Here a word like pristine, often in the combination "pristine wilderness", gets used a lot, and this helps to safely relegate the human influence on the landscape to the distant past.

Bushwalking tracks are the province of bushwalkers, and some have a historical interest, but it is not a topic that has troubled academia greatly. Until recently the

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3 Australian Heritage Database, "Place Details, Innes Track, Overland Trk, Cradle Valley, TAS", http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=103781 (accessed May 17, 2010).

4 EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black," *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)* 37, Paper 43 (August 3, 1897).

only source of historical information on the Mole Creek Track was bushwalking magazines, although the most influential article was published more than 40 years ago.[5] It took a well researched book by Nic Haygarth on the history of the Cradle Mountain area to show that there was more to this track than the commonly understood history.[6] This research was added to recently by Tim Jetson in his history of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park.[7]

This thesis seeks to establish that the Mole Creek Track embodies many important aspects of Tasmanian history including: the development of land routes, bush surveying, track construction, mineral prospecting, the working lives of bush-farmers, nature tourism, regionalism, West Coast mining, seasonal cattle-grazing and hunting. This is a story that starts with the "railway wars" of the 1890s, which has been described in some detail by Geoffrey Blainey in *The Peaks of Lyell.*[8] His chapter *The Railway Wars* gives an overview of the competing overland trade routes between central and western Tasmania and the alternative sea transport, but he makes little mention of overland tracks although they were a part of these wars. Lou Rae added some detail in *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast,* which he introduced with an excerpt from EG Innes' report on the Mole Creek Track and he also mentioned its role in the discovery of minerals at Tullah.[9] However, the focus of his book was the development of railways on the West Coast, not tracks. His doctorate, *The Lost*

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5 Geoff Lambert, "Innes Track," *Tasmania Tramp* 22 (1976): 54-64.

6 Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle; A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country* (1998).

7 Tim Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise; A History of the Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve to May 1922" (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005).

8 Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, 6th ed. (Hobart: St. David's Park Publishing, 2000).

9 Lou Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast* (Moonah: Rae, 1984).

Province, examines the isolation of the West Coast and tracks, but was focussed on the development of Queenstown.[10] Roberts gives a very good overview of the competition for access to the West Coast, both overland and by sea.[11]

Tim Jetson has rectified the omission of tracks from the "railway wars" by deftly turning them into "route wars".[12] He examined the Mole Creek Track as access to the West Coast and also, very importantly, studied the lives of the highland pastoralists, hunters and prospectors in detail. These are all areas that were previously neglected.

Tracks and the exploration of Western Tasmania up to 1890 were examined by Binks.[13] Although outside of his main scope of *Explorers of Western Tasmania* later 'exploration' tracks, which included the Mole Creek Track, were briefly discussed in an appendix, which also included few observations on track cutting. In *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast*, he devotes a chapter, *The Traveller*, to the different transport options within and to the West Coast from the perspective of the traveller, rather than the track-makers.[14]

This thesis builds on the existing literature by examining some underused sources. The most important is the Public Works Department (PWD) files for the construction of Mole Creek Track, and other contemporary tracks. Added to this

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10 Lou Rae, "The Lost Province, Exploration, Isolation, Innovation and Domination in the Mount Lyell Region 1859-1935" (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005).

11 Glyn Roberts, *Metal Mining in Tasmania 1804 to 1914* (Launceston: Bokprint, 2007)

12 Tim Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise".
Jetson also added another, earlier "war", but that does not concern this thesis.

13 Chris Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania* (Devonport: Taswegia, 1989).

14 Chris Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1988).

was field work, first to find as much of the track as practical, and then to excavate small sections to examine construction methods. Locating the track required surveying and navigation skills that have not been applied to the Mole Creek Track before. Surveys of mineral leases and freehold land and aerial photographs from Mineral Resources Tasmania and Department of Primary Industries and Water were invaluable.

The final step was to critically examine all the information. EG Innes' regular reports, which were published in the newspapers, tell a subtly different story to that in his final report, and visiting the country he talked about added more insight. Another perspective came from a local journalist, and PWD contractor named Daniel Griffin, who became a strong critic of EG Innes and the track that he surveyed. His remarks, corrected for some bias, challenge many parts of Innes' commentary. The history of the construction of the track is also examined by using a number of sources, archival and archaeological, to provide a more nuanced understanding.

The practice of surveying tracks and their construction has not been examined before in significant detail. The only two sources located were from New Zealand. PJ Mahoney's 'Graded Pack Tracks: an Unappreciated Resource' is a very brief, but highly insightful article which contextualises pack tracks in New Zealand and is the only academic work to consider their design philosophy. He described track features and gave practical information on the conservation issues for tracks, particularly those in current use.[15] Jackie Breen, a practitioner within

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[15] PJ Mahoney, "Graded Pack Tracks: an Unappreciated Historic Resource", *Australian Historical Archaeology* 9 (1991): 76-78.

the Department of Conservation, has prepared heritage assessments of pack tracks of the west coast of New Zealand's South Island that provided a historical context for their construction and detail on their physical remains.[16]

There was no written information, archival or secondary, on the process of surveying the route of a track. The process was inferred from qualitative comments of Surveyor Innes, examining the route in the field, looking at changes made to the route by the later construction gangs and considering the arguments made in the newspapers over the route. The track itself was the most eloquent source of information, although it had to be interpreted through archival material and field work.

The construction of tracks was another area without any significant secondary information, other than Breen's practical work. On the West Coast, there has been one heritage survey conducted by Snelgrove who examined the Corinna Track for Forestry Tasmania and the Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage and made concise description of its condition of a track and historical context.[17] The most useful comparative literature was of road construction by convict gangs in the early nineteenth century. John Thompson combined archival and field work to locate a convict road in Tasmania and was able to compare the two

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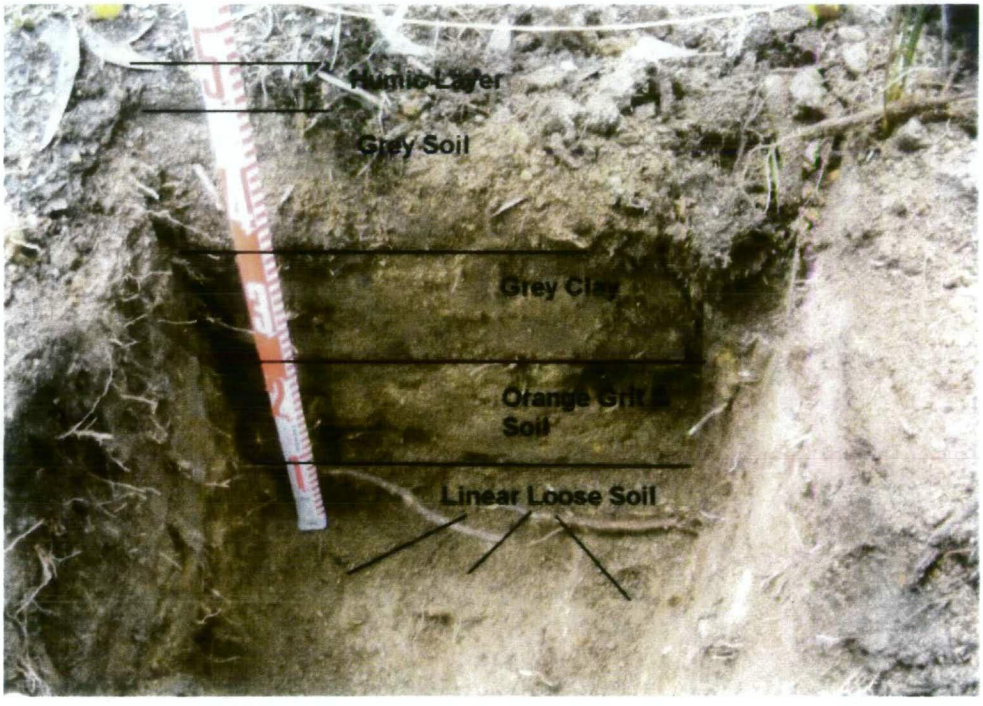
16 The history of tracks on the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand had many parallels to those to the West Coast of Tasmania, the purposes for construction, methods of construction, topography and vegetation, and later use for tourism.
Jackie Breen, Croesus Track Heritage Assessment and Baseline Inspection Report, August 2006, Department of Conservation;
http://www.doc.govt.nz/publications/conservation/historic/by-region/west-coast/croesus-track-heritage-assessment/ (accessed February 25, 2010).

17 C Snelgrove, Corinna Track Survey Report, Prepared for the Forestry Commission and the Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, Tasmania (July 1991).

sources of information.[18] Some excavations of the road also revealed useful information about the construction standard. For this thesis, the source of information was archival photographs of some of the track, track-making tender details and excavations. The excavations, and close examination of the track, revealed many previously unsuspected details. The Parks and Wildlife Service permitted the excavations under the supervision of a consultant archaeologist.



Excavation of Culvert (Brown 2008)

The working life and background of the track construction gangs have received no previous attention. Karskens and Webb have examined the working routine of work gangs on the Great North Road, in New South Wales, in some detail.[19] Karskens' methodology had direct application, even though she was describing

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18 J Thompson, *A Road in Van Diemen's Land*,(Hobart: Tasmanian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, 2004).

19 Grace Karskens, "Defiance, Deference & Diligence, Three Views of Convicts in New South Wales Road Gangs" *Australian Historical Archaeology* 4 (1986): 17 – 28;
Grace Karskens, "The construction of the Great North Road" *Transactions of the Institute of Engineers of Australia, Multidisciplinary Engineering Transactions* 2 (1985): 102-111;
Ian Webb, *Blood, Sweat and Irons, Building the Great North Road from Wisemans Ferry to Mt Manning 1827-1832*, (Dharug & Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society).

forced labour building a substantial road. Blainey's look at many facets of everyday life in Australian history, *Black Kettle and Full Moon,* was invaluable in drawing on the diets and lives of rural workers.[20]

The activities of the bush-workers (hunters, prospectors and cattlemen) were difficult to piece together because they wrote little about themselves and their contemporaries who wrote about them did not always understand their lives. Despite the limited literature, some insightful work has been done by Jetson, Haygarth and Cubit.[21] The PWD files on maintenance of the track, particularly at its western end, provided new information.

Bushwalking in the Cradle Mountain region has also been examined by Haygarth, Jetson and others.[22] Jetson's thesis finished with the proclamation of the Scenic Reserve in 1922, and his paper continued to the late 1940s. Haygarth reached the 1960s. Archival research has added some addition information. In this thesis, bushwalkers are a conduit to understand the changing appreciation of the Mole Creek Track.

The recognition, protection and conservation of tracks is not normally an academic issue, but belongs with heritage professionals who manage these cultural heritage assets and who are generally under-resourced and overwhelmed

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20 Geoffrey Blainey, *Black Kettle and Full Moon* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 2003).

21 Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise";
Haygarth, *A View to Cradle;*
Simon Cubit, *Snares and Cattlemen of the Mersey High Country (The Lees of Lees Paddocks)* (Launceston: Regal Press, 1988).

22 Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise";
Tim Jetson, "Hikers' Heaven? Or 'Almost a Paradise for Hikers'", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* 51/1 (March 2004): 37-55;
Haygarth, *A View to Cradle.*

by a rich resource of artefacts. The one source that specifically relates to management issues around heritage tracks was prepared by Ramsay and Truscott in relation to the Regional Forest Agreement. This is a concise and useful paper that identifies and explains a series of barriers to the protection of tracks using practical examples largely relating to Victoria.[23] Breen's heritage surveys have also been drawn on extensively.[24]

The first chapter of this thesis provides familiarisation with the route of the Mole Creek Track through descriptions made early in its life. The methodology for the locating the track is explained in the second half of this chapter.

Chapter Two examines the immediate background to the surveying of the track and the reporting of the survey. The conflict between the two leading newspapers of the day, the *Mercury* and the *Launceston Examiner*, is also used to provide context. The art of surveying a track is examined and the decisions being made in selecting the best route are inferred.

The third chapter describes the cutting of the Mole Creek track by the PWD gangs and the community response to the work. The work-gangs were led by overseers and worked in the bush to make the track. The construction methods are examined in detail and origin of these methods is traced. Excavation of the track and a thorough knowledge of the physical artefact were used to understand the way that the track was built.

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23 J Ramsay and M Truscott, Tracking Through Australian Forests, in Australian ICOMOS 'Making Tracks' Conference, Alice Springs, (May 2001). http://www.iconomos.org./australia (accessed April 10, 2005).

24 Breen, Croesus Track Heritage Assessment and Baseline Inspection Report, (August 2006).

The background and working life of the track cutters are considered in Chapter Four. Information was limited, but, where possible, these men have been traced and their working conditions pieced together. The track was constructed from both the eastern and western ends, each with different social environments which generated gangs with distinct backgrounds, motivation and work ethic. This thesis will show that these differences resulted in the gangs at each end of the track making it to different standards.

Chapter Five considers the use of the track after its construction was completed. It is first examined as a working track that first received heavy use and then declined as many of the prospective mineral fields along its route failed. The track was to be an important direct route for through traffic (people, stock and supplies) to the West Coast, but later events affected this. It opened up country for access for mineral prospecting, and many deposits were found or exploited to various degrees, but Mount Farrell was the largest and longest lived.

The transition of the track from access for bush-workers to recreational walkers is examined in Chapter Six. A small vanguard of walkers used the track from the early 1920s on but only a short section was actively used when it became a key part of the Overland Track at the end of that decade. Bushwalkers dominated the use of the Mole Creek Track and changed its future, its past, and its identity. The track, in common with other tracks with historical significance, has many significant cultural heritage management problems which are examined in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 1 THE TRACK NOW AND THEN - FINDING THE ARTEFACT

The subject is the history of the Mole Creek Track, which will be a journey in time from its conception in the 1890s to its present state. However, the Mole Creek Track is not just a historical abstraction; it is a physical artefact that exists on the ground and within its landscape. And there is no better start but with a guided trip along the track and through its landscape. We will need a number of guides to take us along the full length of the track. They are particularly useful guides because they were eloquent observers, and, like most modern visitors to this area, great admirers of the landscape. But, they were outsiders in this country and they had their own guides. Our guides' guides knew the track and its surrounds because it was where they worked.

We don't know much about these workers: the hunters, cattlemen, track-cutters and prospectors, mainly because they didn't write a lot. They certainly didn't have the easy, practiced, literacy of the journalists, surveyors, government geologists and tourism promoters, who visited their work place. We, and our fellow urban guides, are all too inclined to reflect the glory of the landscape in long romantic prose. The main reason the workers didn't write about the track and its landscape was that the scenery was, at best, a backdrop and, at worst, an impediment, to their daily toil. Theirs was hard physical work in rough, thickly forested, country, which was frequently lashed by bad weather. They endured long lonely weeks and months in make-shift shelters living off the game they hunted. Living here was not something they were going to get romantic or

eloquent about. We will leave these men for the moment and start with our first guide, Frederick Prichard, a journalist and editor of the *Launceston Examiner.* [1]

* * *

Frederick Prichard was the Mole Creek Track's most vocal supporter, with both the energy and the opportunity to spread his views. He wrote detailed accounts of two trips along the track, and his seemingly innumerable articles and editorials are an invaluable insight into the rationale behind its construction. He claimed many benefits for the track but his, and others, over-riding goal was a direct route for trade with the mines of western Tasmania. The track was constructed for financial benefit and Prichard very quickly realised there was potential for tourism as well as trade. Although, he didn't understand this until after he had seen the country, and the track, firsthand in 1898. He explained his motivations in a special supplement to the *Launceston Examiner* but, a little disingenuously, put tourism at the forefront:

> The route which lies through the highlands of Tasmania is picturesque in the extreme. It is a part of the country which would delight the heart of the artist, tourist and amateur photographer, and during the summer months should prove an attractive resort to visitors. ... The country for the best part of the route is open and from the summit of the mountains an extensive view of the surrounding country can be got with peak after peak rising skywards in wild profusion. ... But it is not alone for a tourist's point of view that the track will be advantageous. It will provide a main stock route by which the Rosebery, Zeehan and Mount Lyell centres can be reached and as it passes for more half the distance through the metalliferous belt it will open up a large area of valuable country.[2]

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1 Australian Dictionary of Biography, Online Edition, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110298b.htm (accessed June 25, 2008).

2 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner,* July 9, 1898.

Figure 1-1 Frederick Prichard (State Library of Tasmania, Cyclopedia of Tasmania, http://catalogue.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/item/?id=252090#fullview (accessed January 15, 2011)

Prichard will be our first guide, and despite the passage of more than 110 years the experience of walking the Mole Creek Track has not changed significantly from what he, and his contemporaries, saw. Our guides' words and images are still uncannily familiar because the track and the landscape have changed so little. A modern walker following the track, which is still very clear in many places, will see the same wild scenery and undertake the journey in the same way, on foot with a pack on their back.

It would seem natural to start the journey at Mole Creek. After all it has given its name to the track. Mole Creek was a small remote town, but it was known across Tasmania as the starting point for the great speculation of tracks and railways that would link Launceston with the West Coast. The end of the nineteenth century was the time when there was a frenzy of competition to link the mines of the West

Coast with the rest of Tasmania. This has been christened the "Railway Wars". Southern, north and north-western interests fought in the newspapers, parliament and the share market for a railway line to the mineral wealth of the developing West Coast, be it Zeehan, Queenstown or Rosebery.[3] Mole Creek couldn't claim more than 100 people but it was seen as the natural starting point for any of the northern Tasmanian schemes to link Launceston and the West Coast for one simple reason, it was the western-most end of the Chudleigh line and, therefore, the railhead closest to the West Coast.[4] There were many schemes. Some no more than day-dreaming and some were small groups of prospectors setting out to explore and bridge the unknown, but many went much further. There was the government survey of the Mole Creek & Zeehan Railway in 1890, the private Chudleigh and Zeehan Railway of 1891, the Mole Creek & Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Company track of 1891, the Great Midland & West Coast Railway of 1899, Tasmanian Central and West Coast Railway of 1897 and the government Mole Creek Track of 1896. [5]

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3 The "Railway Wars" have been described by Lou Rae, Geoffrey Blainey, Tim Jeston and Nic Haygarth;
Lou Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast* (Moonah: Rae, 1984);
Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, 6th ed. (Hobart: St. David's Park Publishing, 2000): 112-123;
Tim Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise; A History of the Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve to May 1922" (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005);
Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle; A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country* (1998), 69.

4 FRM Hudspeth quoted in *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac 1897*, (Hobart: Davies Brothers), 251.

5 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 70-71;
Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways,* 107, 89;
EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)* 37, Paper 43, (August 3, 1897).

Figure 1-2 Mersey Bridge at Liena, Looking West (Brown 2007)

Figure 1-3 Prichard, Phil Parsons, J. Wilson and Knowle (order unknown) Setting out from Liena, 1898 (Spurling, *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898)

Mole Creek was the end of the railway but 'a good road practicable for vehicles of all kinds' connected it to the real start of the Mole Creek Track at Liena.[6] A modern road from Mole Creek to Liena passes the popular tourist attraction of King Solomons Caves and continues to the banks of the Mersey River. Liena hasn't changed much from the photographer and tourism promoter John Watt Beattie's description in 1901 of 'a clear grassy flat ...with a couple of cottages and a hut comprising the township'.[7]

Liena, also called Mersey Bridge, was the 'official' start and all distances were measured from there, even though a good road continued for another three miles to Gads Hill. The 75 mile route of the track between Liena, at its eastern end, to Rosebery, at its western end, is shown in Map 1. Prichard climbed to Gads Hill on the road along which 'a cart could easily be taken'.[8] The road went:

> steadily up hill, crossing fern clad gullies, with a slight trickle of water in them, the hillside densely covered with peppermint, white topped stringy bark, sassafras, tree ferns, and all the underground rubbish that clothes Tasmanian hillsides[9]

Since then the forest has been cleared to make small farms and the small families of bush farmers struggled on for many years until they gave up. Now the hillside is returning to forest, albeit as eucalypt plantations. The original road made in the 1880s is now a vehicular gravel road, Old Gads Hill Road.

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6 Alexander Mackintosh Reid, "The Mount Pelion Mineral District", *Geological Survey Bulletin,* No. 30, Department of Mines, Tasmania (1919): 7.

7 John Watt Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", *Proceedings and Papers of Royal Society of Tasmania,* (September 9, 1901): xxvi.

8 Prichard, "Westward Ho!, The Mole Creek Track, No.1", *Launceston Examiner*, March 22, 1898.

9 Ibid.

Figure 1-4 Old Gads Hill Road (Brown 2007)

Old Gads Hill Road crosses Olivers Road, the main sealed road linking Mole Creek and Cethana, near the top of Gads Hill. Beyond Olivers Road, the old road climbs on the northern side of the gully formed by Ration Tree Creek. It was well made in its day but it is now heavily eroded and partially overgrown. Prichard was taken by a glade near Ration Tree Creek. He called it 'a typical Tasmanian scene and with the sunlight streaming through the foliage overhead, lighting up mossy nooks, outlining the delicate tracery of the fern fronds'.[10] The appreciation of ferns had taken a significant place in the popular imagination reaching the point of obsession with "fern fever", pteridomania.[11] Stephen Spurling III, a member of the pioneering Launceston photography family, accompanied Prichard on his first journey. His photographs show how little has changed.

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10 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner,* July 9, 1898.

11 Wikipedia, "Pteridomania", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pteridomania, (accessed January 16, 2011).

Ration Tree Creek was the place that Surveyor EG Innes chose in 1897 to begin the line of the Mole Creek Track. Here he 'decided to leave this road, ...marked the track along what had apparently been an old road formerly cleared by the Public Works Department, but now blocked with fallen timber, scrub, and rubbish'.[12] The track crosses through the creek at a natural ford near the ruins of a small bridge. On the other side, it is cut into the side of the gully to form a broad flat bench and then it crosses open country on the way up Gads Hill. The slope levels near the top of Gads Hill and a line of reeds growing in an old rut shows where the track ran.

Figure 1-5 Ration Tree Creek (Spurling, Supplement to the *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898)

12 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 3.

Figure 1-6 Benched Track near Ration Tree Creek (Brown 2007)

In its day, now long gone, Gads Hill was a busy farm with houses at the 'Old Station' on the top of the hill and the 'New Station' near Ration Tree Creek. In 1901 Beattie was struck by the active cattle station, one of many that belonged to the Field family. He called it 'nicely grassed' and saw 'horses and cattle enjoying themselves amidst the plenty around'.[13] The Field cattle empire is gone now and cattle no longer graze there and forestry plantations have taken up much of the 'Old Station'.

Prichard's local guides may have told him that south from Gads Hill, the Mole Creek Track followed an old stock route because he wrote that the Mole Creek Track 'sticks pretty close to the old one except where bends are cut off, and the kinks generally straightened'.[14] There was a very long history of tracks between

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13 Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", xxvi.

14 Prichard, "Westward Ho!, The Mole Creek Track, No.1", *Launceston Examiner*, March 22, 1898.

Gads Hill and the valleys to the south: Howells Plains, Lees Paddocks, Pelion Plains and Arm River. In many places, the Mole Creek Track exploited the older routes that had developed for cattle droving, logging, snaring and prospecting. And before the Europeans, Aboriginal people accessed the high country for seasonal hunting. In 1837, Charles Robinson, son of George Augustus Robinson, was guided by Aborigines along just this route, their route, as far as the Pelion Plains.[15]

Continuing south from Gads Hill the country was, according to Prichard, 'open and undulating, with no particular features, being somewhat like the country at the back of Trevallyn, only flatter'.[16] Since then most of this high plateau between the Mersey and Forth Rivers has been logged and the track has been damaged but nevertheless the route can be followed. Between Gads Hill and Lemonthyme Hill the route of the Mole Creek Track has now been appropriated by roads such as Gads Hill Road or logging roads. At Lemonthyme Hill, Prichard saw that the old stock-route 'went over the hill sharply but the new one [Mole Creek Track] makes a better grade, and the hillside has been levelled out so that a cart could be taken along it'.[17]

The track is still overlain by a gravel road for about a half a mile until the Mole Creek Track enters Brown Plain. Any original, or later, formation is briefly lost on this marshy land. There are plains along most of the centre of the plateau, where the track runs. Each plain is separated by small bands of trees. They were

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15 Charles Robinson, *Journal of Six Days Journey in Pursuit of the Hampshire Hills Aborigines* 1837, Mitchell Library.

16 Prichard, "Westward Ho!, The Mole Creek Track, No.1", *Launceston Examiner*, March 22, 1898.

17 Ibid.

collectively known as Big Plain but now that name only survives as the local name for Borradaile Plain. Brown Plain also marks where the Mole Creek Track and the old stock route to Howells Plains part their ways. The absence of a clear route here is not a new problem. JW Cheek, a Launceston mining speculator, warned in 1897 that:

> Anyone travelling along Mr Innes's route will need to be especially careful in crossing over Big Plain, as the travelling being so easy, the pack horses used by miners and others have not kept to the defined track, and moreover, the cattle track, and the resemblance of each plain, with its border of tea-tree bears to all other tends to confuse one.[18]

After Brown Plain, the route passes through a band of logged timber to reach Borradaile Plain. There is no original formation here, but just as it enters this plain there are distinct ruts formed by years of cattle droving. And a gate way onto the plain is clear, even though there is no sign of the structure, as a deep rut worn where the stock milled and funnelled through where the gate once stood.

Figure 1-7 Borradaile Plain (Brown 2007)

According to Cheek the Borradaile Plain was 'one of the finest areas of feeding country' that he had seen in the north, but it 'is for summer feeding only'. The

18 JW Cheek, "The Way to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, February 26, 1897.

large plain 'cannot be seen from any one spot, as it is broken up by many marshes, which carry a fringe of tea-tree scrub'.[19] A few Mole Creek farmers still continue the old tradition of running cattle here in summer and they maintain an old hut and skin-shed. In 1897 Cheek said that the plain was 'staked across', but there are no stakes now. For a few miles south of the Borradaile Plain logging has destroyed any signs of the track.[20]

Finally, miles from the start, the first section of undamaged track is found. This is where it rises through, what Prichard called, 'a heavy band of timber' to the eastern side of February Plains.[21] It may have been long abandoned and the forest has regrown completely, but the substantial rocky benching made by the Public Works Department (PWD) gangs under Overseer Broomhall is still clear in the open understorey of the forest. It impressed Prichard who said that 'Mr Broomhall has done it well, [t]he track is cleared 8 ft wide, the bad places levelled and filled in, and rough culverts put in one or two places'.[22] It sidles up through thick forest and scrub to the elevated February Plains. It emerges onto the open, marshy, plains, which for Prichard was the worst part of the track.[23] Little effort was put into making the track across the February Plains and now only a few well formed sections remain.

In good weather this high, open country is a magnificent place to be. It provides glimpses of many of the mountains of the Western Tiers and Cradle Mountain

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19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Prichard, "Westward Ho!, The Mole Creek Track, No.2",*Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.;
This section became lost to the memory of the cattlemen who grazed and lived on the February Plains who had reverted to an earlier track on the western side of the plains.

area. In poor weather it is exposed and dangerous. The highest point is called the Divide and many have stood here to admire the view. Beattie gives a fine description of

> a very fine panorama of the mountains ahead, from the west to the south can be obtained. The Cradle Mountain, away to the north, Mount Oakley Range and West Pelion, to the west, while between west and south we can see the Pelion, Du Cane, Rugged and Pillinger groups, all fine, bold mountain ranges while on the plains below us two or three large tarns break up what could otherwise be rather a rather monotonous foreground, completing a finely picturesque panorama.[24]

The physical remains of the Mole Creek Track at this point are just a rut in the western saddle on the Divide. All signs are quickly lost until the southern end of the February Plains. Again we defer to Beattie's description of where the plain:

> narrows down into a gully-like form, collecting and concentrating its drainage, one of the great feeders of the Mersey, and delivering its waters down into a great river gorge far below, we get a fine and bold angular aspect of Mount Pillinger - or Mag's Mountain - very picturesquely terminates this end of February Plain.[25]

The Mole Creek Track is marked by a line of stakes and stone cairns as it runs down this gully. These date from 1935 when the track defined part of the eastern boundary of the Cradle Mountain Nature Reserve and were intended to stop hunting in the Reserve. A faint pad running beside the line of stakes is all that remains of the wear from many years of traffic. The gully, containing Wurragarra Creek, narrows further and as it steepens the track becomes solidly cut into the cross-slope. It fords the creek and turns west to be taken over by the bushwalkers' Arm River Track. Here is another treat for travellers, 'at the head of this track', Beattie reported, 'we are confronted with an impressive scene, a vast mountain amphitheatre, formed by Pillinger, Rugged, Du Cane, East Pelion and Oakley Ranges'.[26] The view from here rarely fails to cause bushwalkers to stop to look out over Lees Paddocks and its surrounding mountains.

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24 Beattie ,"Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", xxvii

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

Figure 1-8 Mount Pelion East (Spurling, Supplement to *Launceston Examiner,* July 9, 1898)

Figure 1-9 Arm River Track – Same View as Figure 1.8 (Brown 2002)

Between the February Plains and the Pelion Plains at Lake Ayr, Beattie found the track 'well defined'.[27] It was very well made because most of it was cut into the side of the hill. The track here also has many culverts to cross the proliferation of small watercourses. The Arm River Track passes Lake Ayr and over the Pelion Plains to a bushwalkers' hut at Douglas Creek, where it joins the Overland Track. South towards Lake St Clair the Overland Track follows an old snarers' track. Going west, it is, with some improvements, still the Mole Creek Track.

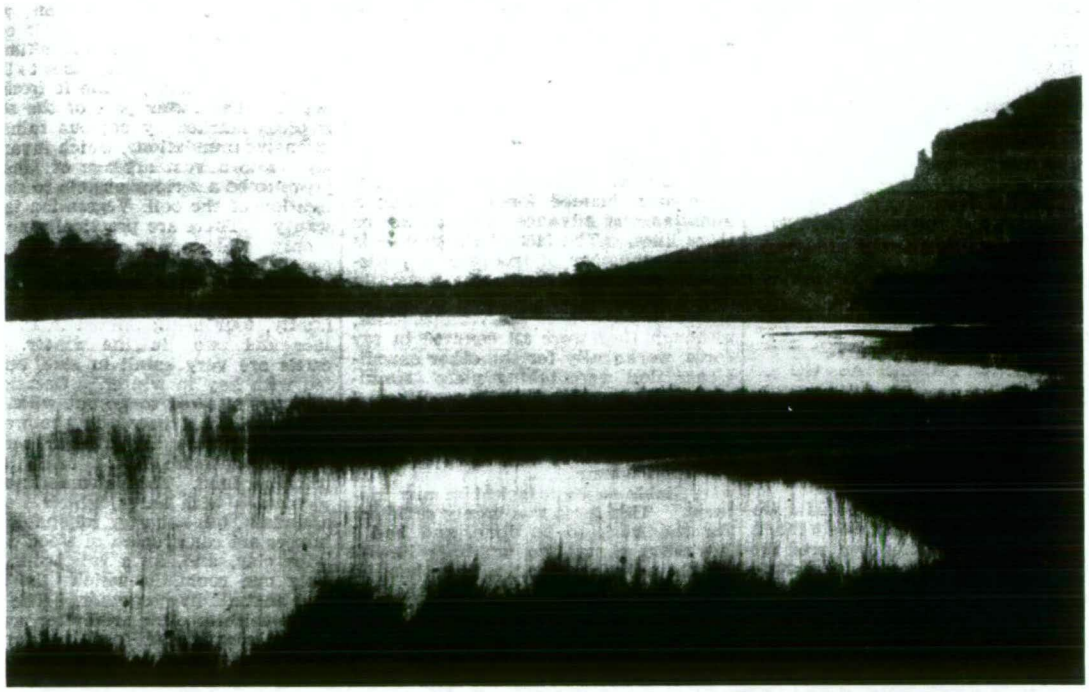

Figure 1-10 Lake Ayr (Spurling, Supplement to *Launceston Examiner,* July 9, 1898)

Beattie was enthusiastic about this part of the Mole Creek Track.

> From the branch off to the Pelion Huts the track runs through a belt of forest clothing the southern bend of the Forth Gorge and sweeps around in a great bend under bases of Mounts Walker [Thetis], Ossa and West Pelion which tower over very grandly all round and rising along the east side of West Pelion until the Forth Gorge is cleared. [28]

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27 Ibid.

28 Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", xxix.
Beattie renamed some other mountains; Ossa as Backhouse, Achilles as Bonwick and attributed Lake Windermere to its English namesake, rather than the prospector James Windermere Lord.

Just as Beattie described it, the track descends through forest to Frog Flats, an open plain on the Forth River, and then rises across the flanks of Mount Pelion West. The view of the surrounding mountains at Frog Flats is spectacular, but it is the overbearing Mount Pelion West that is the most impressive and intimidating. It is hard to believe that the track could rise over its steep forested lower flanks. But it does with ease. The steep cross-slope meant that the track was cut deeply into the side of the mountain. Except for the occasional minor piece of work - some boardwalk, replacement of small bridges, minor earthworks and wear of thousands of walkers each year – this section of the Mole Creek Track is little changed. This was the best way of crossing the Forth Gorge and, once built, it was never completely abandoned by prospectors, cattlemen, snarers, geologists or bushwalkers.

Figure 1-11 Beattie at Pelion Plains Hut, 1901 (Beattie 1901, TMAG)

Bill Wilkinson, *The Abels, Tasmania's Mountains over 1100m High, Volume 1*, (Launceston: the Tasmanian Outdoors Collection, 1994): 86-89;
Parks and Wildlife Service, *The Overland Track – One walk, Many journeys'*, (2006): 39.

Figure 1-12 Mount Pelion West (Beattie 1901)

After the long steady climb the track climbs from the gloom of the forest into the open, and normally the brilliant open sky, at the flat moor-land called Pine Forest Moor. Prichard described the track passing between, on the right side, a scrub of King Billy pines (Pine Forest Moor), and, on the left, a spur of West Pelion. Since the 1980s the Overland Track has passed through, rather than around, the 'pine scrub'.[29] A rougher trip, but less exposed to bad weather. On the northern edge of this forest the tracks join again near a popular stopping point for bushwalkers, which is best described by Beattie:

> Just as the track takes a north-westerly turn, it overlooks the Forth River Gorge, and it presents to me a sense of the wildest grandeur. Photography cannot convey anything like a correct representation of the scene which I have not seen surpassed in all my bush wanderings for weird sublimity.[30]

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29 Prichard, "Westward Ho!, The Mole Creek Track, No.3", *Launceston Examiner*, March 24, 1898.
The forest itself, rather than the open plain that surrounds it, is now called Pine Forest Moor.

30 Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", xxix.

In the nineteenth century, the 'Sublime' was an expression of the relationship of humans to nature. In the art, photography and literature of the time it described the insignificance of humans against the power of nature.[31] The Forth Gorge lookout, under the face of Mount Pelion West captures these feelings. In Beattie's time, the best known Tasmanian proponent of this style was the artist William Piguenit, who painted many scenes around Lake St Clair and the west, but other artists and photographers practiced this approach.[32]

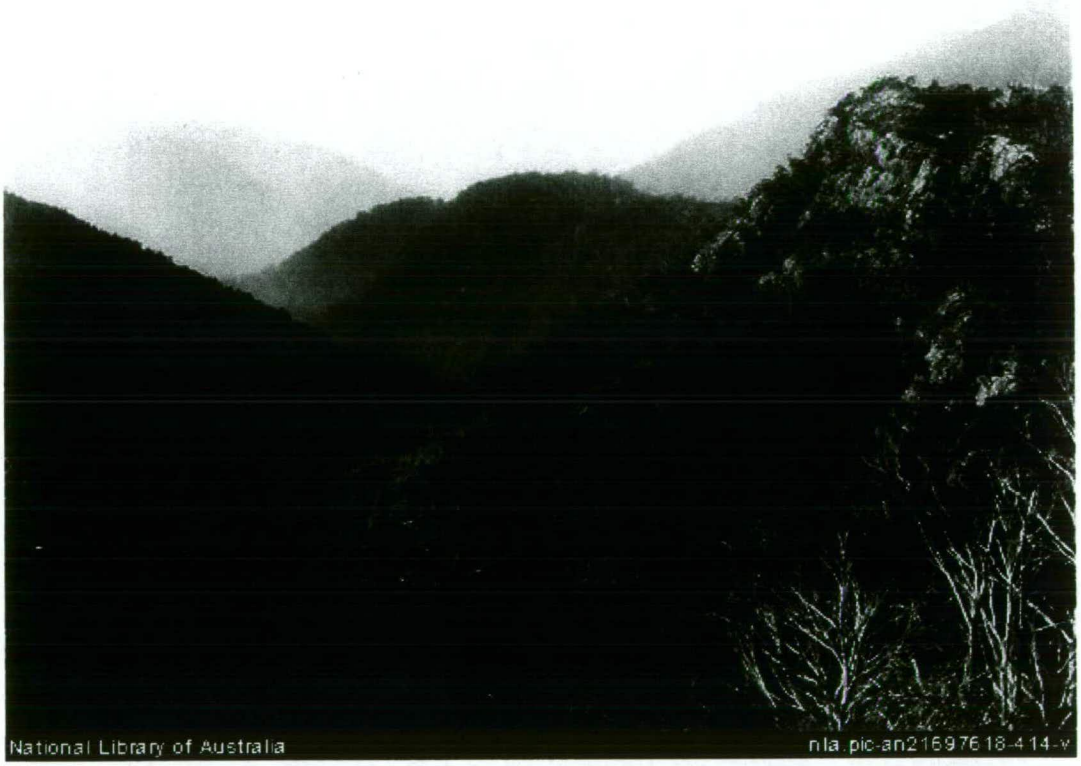

Figure 1-13 Forth River Gorge (Spurling National Library of Australia, undated)

31 A more extensive discussion of the Sublime is given by Haygarth, *The Wide Ride* (Launceston: Bokprint, 2008), 6.

32 Roslynn Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions, Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography* (Sandy Bay: Polymath Press, 2006): 154-164

Figure 1-14 South Along Track near Pine Forest Moor, to Mount Ossa, Paddys Nut, Thetis and Pelion West (L to R) (Brown 2000)

Barn Bluff and Cradle Mountain now become landmarks for the journey north as the track continues over open, exposed plains. Like today's bushwalkers, Prichard found the track 'easy travelling, the surface being spongy, and timber light' and if it was less elevated and exposed to bad weather then it would be 'nice park-like country'.[33] Just before Lake Windermere, the Overland Track goes its own way and the Mole Creek Track rises onto a ridge overlooking the lake and turns west towards Lake Will across open moor-land. Prichard is still our guide, '[s]everal lakes were passed in the three or four miles approaching Lake Will, but none of such proportions as the one named. The Lake of Islands [Lake Windermere] is a nice sheet of water with some islets in the centre'.[34] It is still a very popular place for photographers. The track makes a turn to resume the journey west and heads directly towards Mount Inglis. It climbs to Lake Will,

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33 Ibid.

34 Prichard, "Westward Ho!, Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 21, 1899.

which sits below the large broad rocky head of Barn Bluff, and continues west. Beyond here we have a new guide, Charles Whitham, who made the journey from Cradle Valley to Tullah in 1920. He was impressed by the scene where 'the Bluff River, draining Lake Will, makes a fine waterfall down this cirque'.[35] This waterfall, which attracts bushwalkers as a side-trip from the Overland Track, has been named Innes Falls.

Figure 1-15 Mole Creek Track Looking North near Pine Forest, Barn Bluff (L) and Cradle Mountain (R) (Brown 2007)

Figure 1-16 Near Lake Windermere Looking East, Mount Oakleigh, (L) Mt Pelion East (Centre) (Richmond 1950)

35 James Oddman (Charles Whitham), "The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 7, 1920.

Figure 1-17 Track at Mount Inglis, looking towards Barn Bluff (Brown 2006)

Even though this western end of the Mole Creek Track has been long abandoned some stakes and clearing are still evident between Lake Will and Tullah because it was restaked in 1939. Moss covered decaying stakes form a precise line across the plain west of the lake. Bushwalkers seldom follow them but grazing wombats have assiduously maintained a narrow path beside the stakes. A few small culverts lie broken in stream beds. The track disappears and reappears as it goes closer to Mount Inglis.

The eastern flank of Mount Inglis is typical of the track. Fire and the quick growing eucalypt forest have all but destroyed the cleared line of the track and the stakes, but when it starts to climb the face of the mountain it is clearly cut into its side. At the steepest cross-slope it is very heavy cut, but the regrowth is so thick as to make it almost impossible to follow. Then it bursts from the darkness of the

forest and onto an open alpine meadow on the northern side of Mount Inglis called Fury Divide No.2. Here there are 360° views of most of the mountains of the West Coast and Cradle Mountain area. Looming across the deep valley of the Fury River, are Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff. Anyone who has stood here will forgive Whitham his romantic prose when he described the scene:

> Here in the still clearness of the young day I had a crowded hour of glorious vision. All the mountains - and there are very many of them - could be seen as far as Mount Jukes and the Frenchman's Cap. I have never known such a morning, and my only sorrow was that there was no other to share the joy.[36]

Figure 1-18 Looking West to Granite Tor and Mount Murchison from Mt Inglis (Brown 2006)

The art of track hunting must now be fully utilised to find the occasional stake and rut made by travellers decades ago. From these high alpine meadows the country to the west can be seen for the first time, with Granite Tor, Mount Swallow and Mount Black now in sight. Granite Tor is only a few miles west but the track must take a convoluted route to avoid the thickly forested river valleys that lie on either side of a series of narrow open plains. The track weaves around

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36 Ibid.

some small hills and marshy button -grass plains. In places the track is marked by a line of thick regrowth in open country because the benching holds water and makes excellent growing conditions for tea-tree and bottle-brush.

The track turns north to climb up a long spur of Granite Tor. The vagaries of regrowth are evident with some parts of the track being completely choked by bauera and others parts are clear and open through forest. In 1900, JW Lord, a prospector, from Rosebery reached Granite Tor to:

> see several different kinds of flowering shrubs and the pretty Blanfordia in all its beauty, so we must stop to look at and admire it, as also the country around us. For many miles we can see high ranges at every point of the compass and wonder how prospectors ever get through alive, without expecting them to find minerals in that vast wilderness. [37]

But Lord and his group also encountered the rocks that give Granite Tor it name, 'the horrible granite, the glare of which is very trying on the eyes. As the sun is now well up and shining on the enormous boulders, which are seen on every side'. [38] Across the open top of Granite Tor the track is little more than a rough path and then it reaches the other side of the summit to dive steeply down its western side. Whitham's description of the track from here is still recognisable; he followed it, 'down [through] the gum forest that clothes the western side of High Tor, then twists over moorland, coppices, timbered gullies and bubbling brooks until Swallow Hill is reached, ten miles from Tullah'.[39] This was once one of the easiest sections of the track to follow but the country is no longer burnt by prospectors, track-cutters or hunters. Tea-tree and bauera have regrown thicker than the original forest making the track difficult for modern bushwalkers to follow.

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37 JW Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount", *Tasmanian Mail*, April 28, 1900.

38 Ibid.

39 Whitham, "The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount".

The track follows the Brougham River to Whitham's Swallow Hill, Mount Swallow. It is benched in places and has been cleared here and there by mineral exploration companies in the 1980s.[40] The track is cut deeply into the flank of Mount Swallow and is obvious in the open understorey of the forest. But this section was abandoned in the 1920s in favour of a direct, but steep, line down the face of Mount Swallow.

At the bottom of Mount Swallow, the track disappears under Lake Mackintosh, a hydro-electric dam. Before it was flooded it was a broad, boggy button-grass plain near the Sophia River called Sophia Flat.[41] And like the plain, the bridges over the Sophia River are under the waters of the lake. The track would have reappeared on the western side of the lake, under a local landmark called Hanging Rock. Lord walked under it at 'the northern end [of Mount Farrell] with its high quartzite rocks looming above us'.

Figure 1-19 Track at Mount Farrell (unknown 1900, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery)

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40 D. Speijers, Shell Company of Australia, E.L. 2/78 Granite Tor Location of Brougham & Romulus East Grids, February 16, 1982, Mineral Resources of Tasmania.

41 Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount".

The next stop was Tullah, a town born out of the track, but its growth has destroyed all of the track's formation. The only detectable piece is a short section of road known as the Old Mackintosh Track. When Lord passed through in 1900 the town was just a few tents and huts. He 'look[ed] forward at the button-grass flat, and a few miles away' he could see Mount Murchison, 'with its great high rugged rocks and broken sides'.[42]

The Mole Creek Track leaves Tullah to cross the Murchison River on a substantial suspension bridge. However, another Hydro Electric Commission (HEC) dam has claimed the bridge and a few miles of track. The Mackintosh and Murchison Rivers join to form the Pieman River and Lord found the walk along the Pieman River 'nice cool travelling, as the rushing water of the fine old stream is on our left, and the high rugged timbered hills on our left defy the sun'.[43]

Where Lord found rushing water is now the still waters of Lake Rosebery. The track does emerge from the lake but remade as a road for mineral exploration and dam building. Even though the track is gone, the road slavishly follows its route and the gentle grades and curves of the old track are unmistakable. It now starts its final climb along the northern western flanks of Mount Black. The track leaves the road and continues largely untouched for the next few miles heavily benched into the mountain, but overgrown. A few sections of rotting wooden rails show that it once served as a light forest railway for hauling logs.

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42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

Figure 1-20 Murchison River Suspension Bridge (WH Judd, *Tasmanian Mail*, October 22, 1904, 24)

The track emerges from the forest onto a northern spur of Mount Black and swings sharply south to head for the final destination of Rosebery. This last part of the track was also called the Cutty Sark Track after a once promising mineral discovery nearby. The track first heads uphill towards a saddle on the western side of Mount Black. The signs that it has been cleared as access for recent mineral surveying are, at first, subtle but closer to Rosebery the track becomes more heavily modified and it is lost completely in workings of the Rosebery Mine. Beyond this, the remaining half mile to its end at Stitt River Bridge is through the main street of Rosebery and only known from early mineral surveys.

This virtual 75 mile journey has introduced the track, the country and a few of the people who used it. A better way to understand it and its relationship to the landscape is to join thousands of other walkers and follow some of its better known parts, such as the modern Arm River Track or the Overland Track, although this represents only nine and half miles of the track.

Figure 1-21 Rosebery 1898 (Winter Studio, AOT)

These descriptions were taken from the archival record and personal experience during field work. Finding the track, and following its route where there is no formation, was important in gaining a greater understanding of it and its place in the landscape which allowed a depth of interpretation that would have been impossible from the written record.

Finding the Artefact

Finding the Mole Creek Track, under its commonly used name of the Innes Track, might appear, at first, to be an easy task. After all it is well known to many Tasmanian bushwalkers and the tourists who walk the Overland Track. But the known parts are a small fraction of the whole track. A simple search through the back copies of the *Tasmanian Tramp*, a publication of the Hobart Walking Club, and *Skyline*, the magazine of the Launceston Walking Club, was rewarded by

numerous stories of trips to the remoter sections of the track.[44] The problem is that their descriptions of the location of track were fairly vague. The listing in the Register of the National Estate (RNE) didn't give great hope for the eastern end of the track because it states that '[b]etween Liena and Wurragarra Creek, Innes' original 1896 track has been lost or overrun by roads. West of Lake Will, a line of old stakes indicates the route, but is being lost in regrowth'.[45] A bushwalking guidebook ominously added that the track west from Lake Will had 'fallen into disrepair and should not be followed'.[46] However, the simplest place to start was with the sections that were well-known, the Overland Track and the Arm River Track.

The Arm River Track between Wurragarra Creek to the southern side of Lake Ayr showed many features consistent with an old pack track. It was benched to a width of about six feet wide, well graded and had numerous old culverts. West from Lake Ayr to Pelion Hut, where it meets the Overland Track, the normally smooth broad line of the pack track was replaced by a more irregular and narrow path typical of bushwalkers' tracks. The Overland Track from near Pelion Hut to Pelion Creek, on the northern side of Mount Pelion West, was also consistent with

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44 Alice Brearley, "Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair", *Tasmanian Tramp* 2 (1933): 5-13;
Nancy Shaw, Vic Crawn, "The Innes Track", *Tasmania Tramp* 8 (1948): 32-37;
Geoff Lambert, "Innes Track", *Tasmania Tramp* 22 (1976): 54-64;
Charles Whitham, "A Dissertation upon Innes Track", *Tasmanian Tramp* 33 (2000): 128-135;
Peter Brown, "Innes Track", *Tasmanian Tramp* 34 (2002): 31-41
John Wanless, "New Routes in to the Reserve", *Skyline* (1956): 10-14;
Tiger Tim (Tim Hume), "The Valleys Beyond ", *Skyline* (1956): 15-17.

45 Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Australian Heritage Database, Innes Track, http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=103781, (accessed January 25, 2011).

46 John Siseman and John Chapman, *Cradle Mountain National Park*, 2nd ed. (Northcote: Brunswick, 1984): 58.

being the route of the Mole Creek Track as shown by many features of a well made, and old, track.

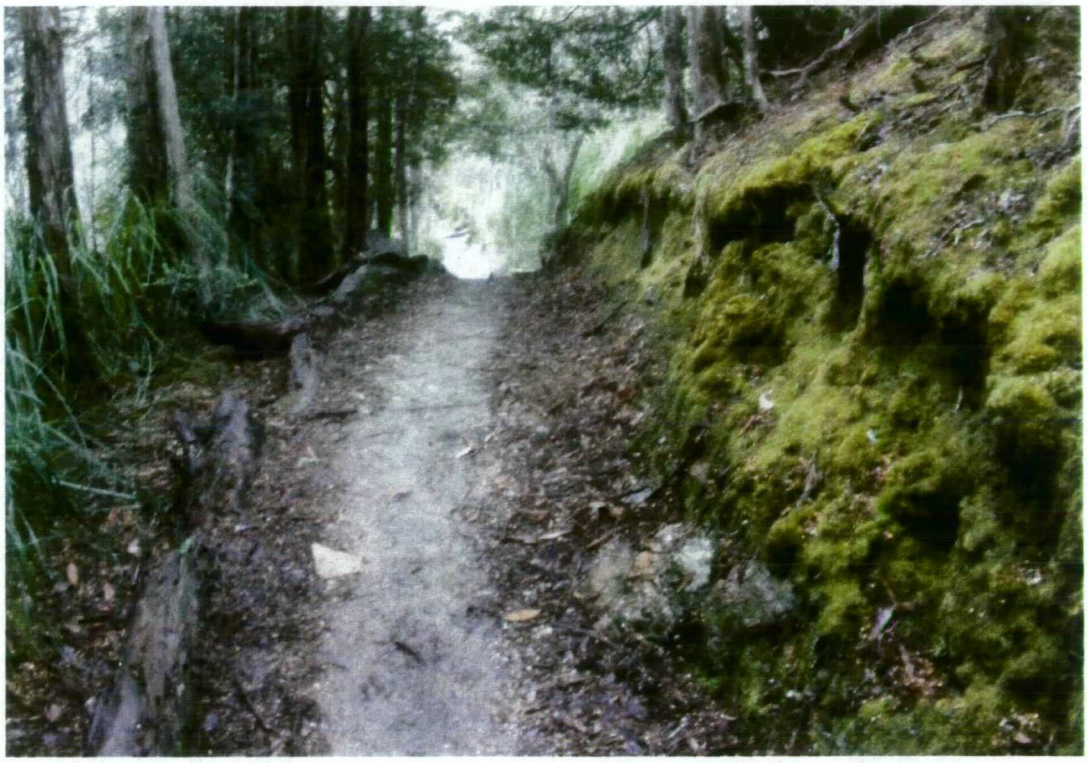

Figure 1-22 Overland Track at Mount Pelion West (Brown 2004)

Further north of Pelion Creek, across Pine Forest Moor, the Mole Creek Track was 'bypassed by [a] new track' for the route of the Overland Track.[47] And no more of the Mole Creek Track could be found on the Overland Track north from Pine Forest Moor to Lake Windermere, even though it was reported to run there. The evidence against its presence was some steep grades, sudden changes in direction, a narrow path and no benching or old culverts. The RNE, which was partially based on bushwalkers information, said that the 'track leading off the Overland Track to Lake Will runs through button-grass and may follow Innes'

47 Tasmap Will 4037, 1:25,000, (1898)

route'.[48] But, it has no features consistent with the Mole Creek Track. In addition, this route did not match a sketch map made by Surveyor Innes and it was not a logical place for the track. West of Lake Will, the stakes mentioned in the guide book were found and a rutted line led across the plains, and some old broken culverts lay in some of the small streams.[49]

The easily available information said that the modern Arm River Track and Overland Track between Wurragarra Creek and Lake Windermere was the Mole Creek Track. This was a total of 15 ½ miles. However, field inspections only confirmed 9 ½ miles as being clearly consistent with an old graded pack track.

The next stage was to move beyond the better known sections. The original report written by EG Innes, the surveyor who 'laid out' the route, and map attached to his report, Figure 1.23, gives a good description of his route, even if the map is inaccurate.[50] Innes' report was often referred to in many of the stories by bushwalkers in the *Tasmanian Tramp* and *Skyline.* There was enough information in his report to search for the track west of Lake Will. This field work started at Lake Will and followed the stakes (mentioned above) until the track was found on a narrow spur on the northern side of Mount Inglis, which Innes had called Fury Divide No.2, and is shown in Figure 1.17. This country was ideal for track finding as the high ridges were covered with slow-growing low alpine moor-land plants. Stakes and ruts were found, with a little effort, and followed over the high plains for several miles. Even though the physical signs

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48 Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Australian Heritage Database, Innes Track.

49 Siseman and *Chapman, Cradle Mountain National Park*, 58.

50 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black".

were lost, the general route described by the bushwalking articles and Innes' report was followed. After a few miles the track was found again as benching and followed from a locality called Mowbrays Pass on the south-eastern spur of Granite Tor, over Granite Tor and onto its western slopes. At this point the country was rough, the track difficult to find, the location didn't match Innes' report and the area was too remote to continue field work without additional support. This ended the search at the western end of the track for some time.

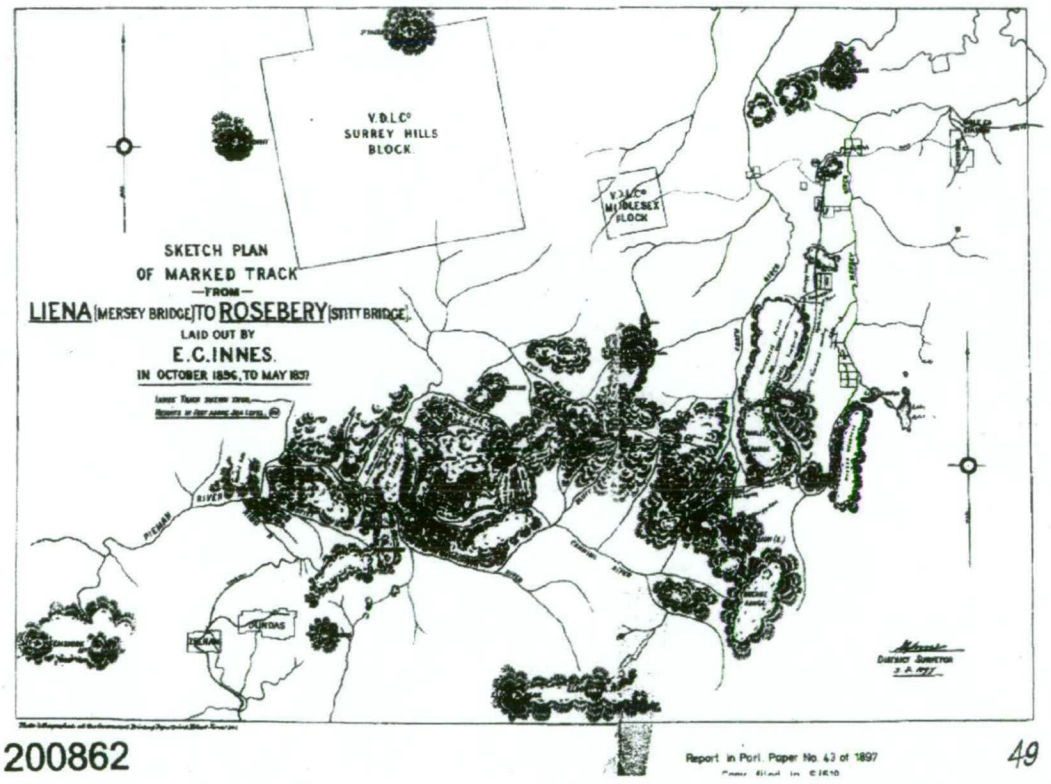

Figure 1-23 Innes Survey Sketch Map (Innes, Parliamentary Report 1897)

Back on the Arm River Track, near Wurragarra Creek, more track was found. A topographic map of this area, the 1989 1:25,000 scale map 'Rowallan', showed a boundary of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park, which was defined between Lake Ayr and the headwaters of Wurragarra Creek by the Innes

Track.[51] It was possible to follow the markers along the park boundary, and to find benching, a ford and ruts consistent with the Mole Creek Track.

Figure 1-24 Stake and Cairn near Wurragarra Creek, Mount Pillinger in the Background (Brown 2004)

After two years of work it became clear that the usefulness of Innes' report and the bushwalking literature was exhausted. The outcome was that about 16 miles of formed track had been found between Wurragarra Creek in the east to Granite Tor in the West.

* * *

51 Sketch Plan of Mineral Sections County of Lincoln, April 1940, Mineral Resources Tasmania.

My understanding of the Mole Creek Track changed profoundly as the research continued. The first challenge to the commonly held understanding of the route of the track came when I examined primary information, largely surveys, at the Lands Title Office and Mineral Resources Tasmania. They showed that the track made some substantial deviations from the route given as the Innes Track. However, Haygarth's book *A View to Cradle* brought the biggest change to my understanding of the track.[52] Contrary to all the previous literature, he revealed that the track was formed by Public Works Department gangs, rather than the small survey party lead by EG Innes. Far more diligence was now needed to locate the track, both by more thorough archival research and using map skills, and in the field looking for the most subtle signs of the track.

I established a basic pattern of investigation, first archival research to identify a search area and then field work to examine that location. The archival material came from a variety of sources, but the best were maps and lease surveys. Other material including bushwalking notes, magazine articles, archival material and aerial photography were useful, but imprecise. Each source of information had deficiencies but comparing different sources largely eliminated these problems and provided reliable locations for much of the track. All the archival material was checked in the field, because the only way to unambiguously determine the location of the track was to physically find it. The details of the archival information will be examined later.

The archival information was transferred onto 1:25,000 scale maps, the most detailed for the area, and onto a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver. The

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52 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 75-77.

GPS generally worked with an accuracy of about 16 feet, but reception was poor under tree cover. In the field the map and GPS would guide me to the expected location and then the art of track hunting would start.

Track hunting required skill to seek out the subtle signs obscured by more than 100 years of neglect or abuse. In some places I couldn't find any formation but the route may be marked by blazes on trees in the forests and stakes or stone cairns in open country. Blazes were found along the track on the eastern flank of the February Plains. Depending on their size and the timber used, stakes could only survive for about 50 years. Any stakes found were not original but came from later remarking.

The subtlest indication of the physical presence of the track was a pad – a line of wear or disturbance of the ground vegetation. Since most of this country is criss-crossed by animal pads or runs, care was needed to discern a pad made by human activity. Although in some places, the track was adopted by wombats, which grazed and maintained a path, albeit a narrow one, for the many years after the track had been abandoned by people. The best confirmation was some formation, culverts or benching, or markers, stakes or cairns, on the same alignment as the pad. More subtle signs were that track pads were often very straight and headed directly towards a landmark. If there was no field evidence, the pad could be confirmed as part of the track if it coincided with a detailed survey of the route.

Figure 1-25 Blaze in Tree near February Plains (Brown 2007)

A little more obvious than a pad is a rut where the ground has been worn, rather than the vegetation, by horses or walkers. In general, a rut would be partially overrun by ground vegetation and so only short sections of disconnected wear are now visible. Ruts may also be made by frequent use of a route by animals, but these tend not to be as deep or as straight as those formed by walkers or horses. Like a pad, there may be other indications that a rut marks the course of the track, such as physical signs or accurate maps to confirm its position. The photograph below (Figure 1-26) shows a rut near Wurragarra Creek near a stake and stone cairn, the staff has four inch graduations.

Figure 1-26 Rut near Wurragarra Creek (Brown 2004)

Figure 1-27 Line of Rocks February Plains (Brown 2004)

Another subtle sign of the track was where stones had been pushed off the route and generally formed a rough line, such as at the eastern side of the February Plains. Benching and culverts were much easier to see, and are unambiguous evidence of a pack track, even if they had been significantly damaged by the passage of time and obscured by heavy regrowth. Long sections of the track were benched. These were the signs to look for in the field work.

Field work located and confirmed the presence of a track. Sometimes archival research was needed to confirm that the track located was indeed the Mole Creek Track. Once a piece of track was located, I would follow it until either it was lost or I reached a known section of track. Each field search was recorded with descriptions, photographs and locations of any features found. The locations were measured using a GPS but sometimes this was not accurate enough to relocate the track in thick scrub.

The most difficult parts of the track to find were where it had been severely disturbed, such as by road building. I now entered the world of the surveyor. It was possible to establish a hierarchy of accuracy for their information. The best surveys were "connecting surveys", which I used to locate the route of the track between Gads Hill and Borradaile Plains. Connecting surveys are used when a lease does not adjoin another lease and so an accurate connection must be made back to a known location. The RNE had stated that the track here was 'lost or overrun by roads'.[53] And it had been, but the route of the track was confirmed from surveys, descriptions and field work. The key was two "connecting

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[53] Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Australian Heritage Database, Innes Track.

surveys" made in 1860 and 1877.[54] And although they predated the construction of the Mole Creek Track they were still very useful as archival sources stated that the track largely followed the route of a pre-existing track to Borradaile Plains. Lease surveys, dating from after the Mole Creek Track had been made, confirmed it in the same location as the earlier connecting survey.

The lease information and the linking surveys were transferred to a modern map.[55] It was clear from the map that roads had taken up some of the route. The road may have destroyed the formation, but the alignment and the grades along the route were entirely consistent with the Mole Creek Track. Useful information could still be gained about the choice of route even without the original formation.

Mineral leases and boundary surveys of freehold land were accurate, but only at the boundaries and only indicative for features within the lease. However, any road reserves within the lease area were surveyed accurately. Locating the lease survey accurately in the landscape was sometimes difficult as original survey markers could not be found, so natural features such as streams and lakes were used.

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54 Diagram from Actual Survey County of Lincoln, May 16, 1862, Folio 1, 40, Lands Survey Department Hobart;
Plan 11, Field Notes, Survey of Lots 9078 & 9354, County of Lincoln, Field Book No. 502, Plan 11, 1877, Lands Survey Department Hobart.

55 Tasmap, Liena 4239, 1:25,000, 2nd Ed, 1991;
Tasmap, Borradaile 4238, 1:25,000, 1981.

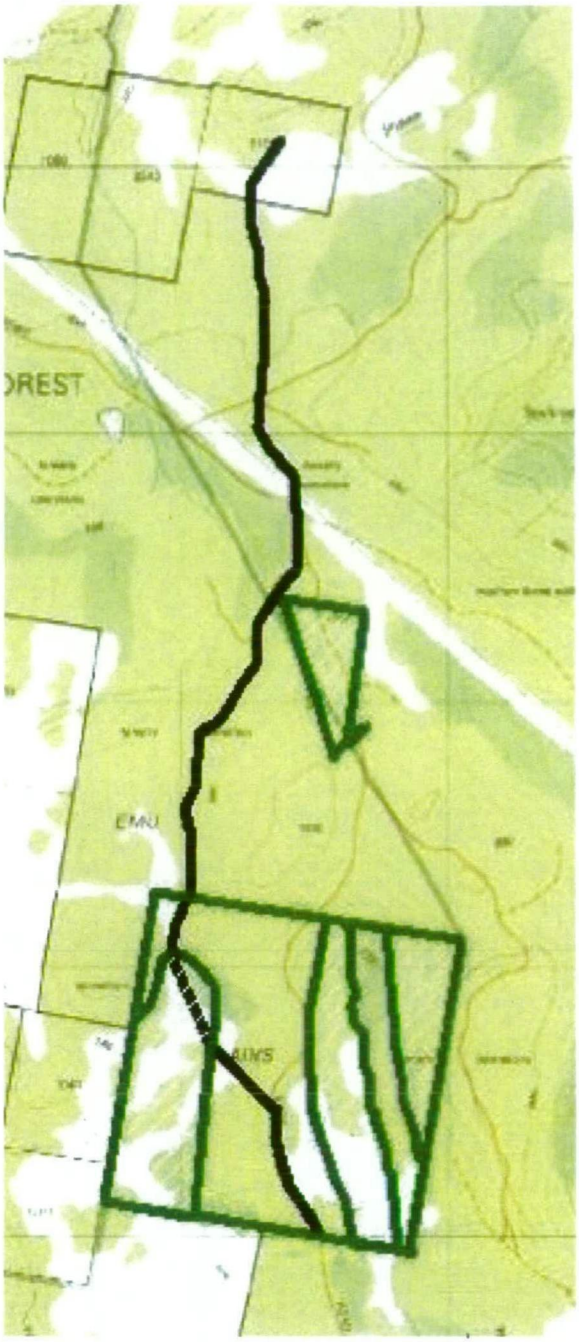

Figure 1-28 Topographical Map with Connecting Superimposed Survey from Gads Hill along Track (left)

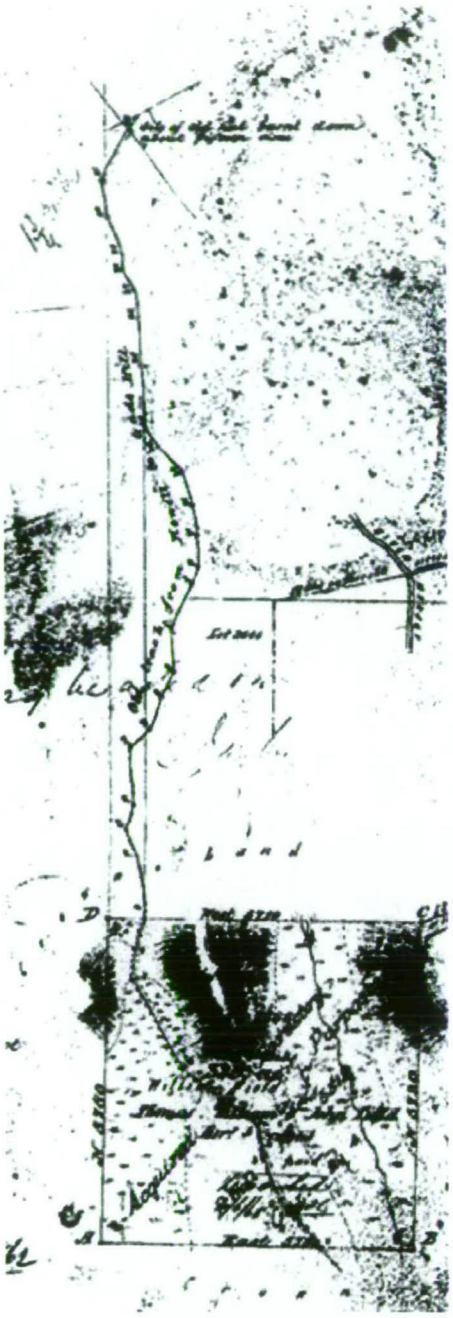

Figure 1-29 Part of 1860 Connecting Survey(right)

Finding the track near Lake Windermere demonstrated how extensive preparation with mineral lease surveys would make finding the track fairly easy. This part of the route, only a few miles from the Overland Track, had been completely forgotten. The Mineral County Chart for this area showed "Innes' Track"

crossing a number of mineral leases, Figure 1.30.[56] I found mineral leases from 1900 to 1908, with their field survey notes, at Mineral Resources Tasmania, for example Figure 1.32. The lease information was added to the modern map, Figure 1.31. My field search focussed on the edge of a small valley where I expected the topography would have required the track to be substantially made, and it would be easier to find. I found it quickly and followed it until the track was lost where it was less well formed and more heavily overgrown. But I continued along the route marked on the mineral lease surveys and found more track features, a line of rock benching, a rock culvert, some ruts and a number of stakes. The track formation was not found for the full distance marked on the surveys because some of the country was level and firm, and therefore didn't need much track-making. However, this field work confirmed the accuracy of the mineral lease surveys and, even when the track could not be physically found in places, its location should be considered to be known because of the reliability of the survey information.

I used a similar approach to find the track at Mount Black and Tullah. These were popular mineral fields that were surveyed extensively. Many of the original leases were made at around the turn of the nineteenth century and so showed the location of the track when it was only a few years old.

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56 Sketch Plan of Mineral Sections County of Lincoln, April 1940, Mineral Resources Tasmania.

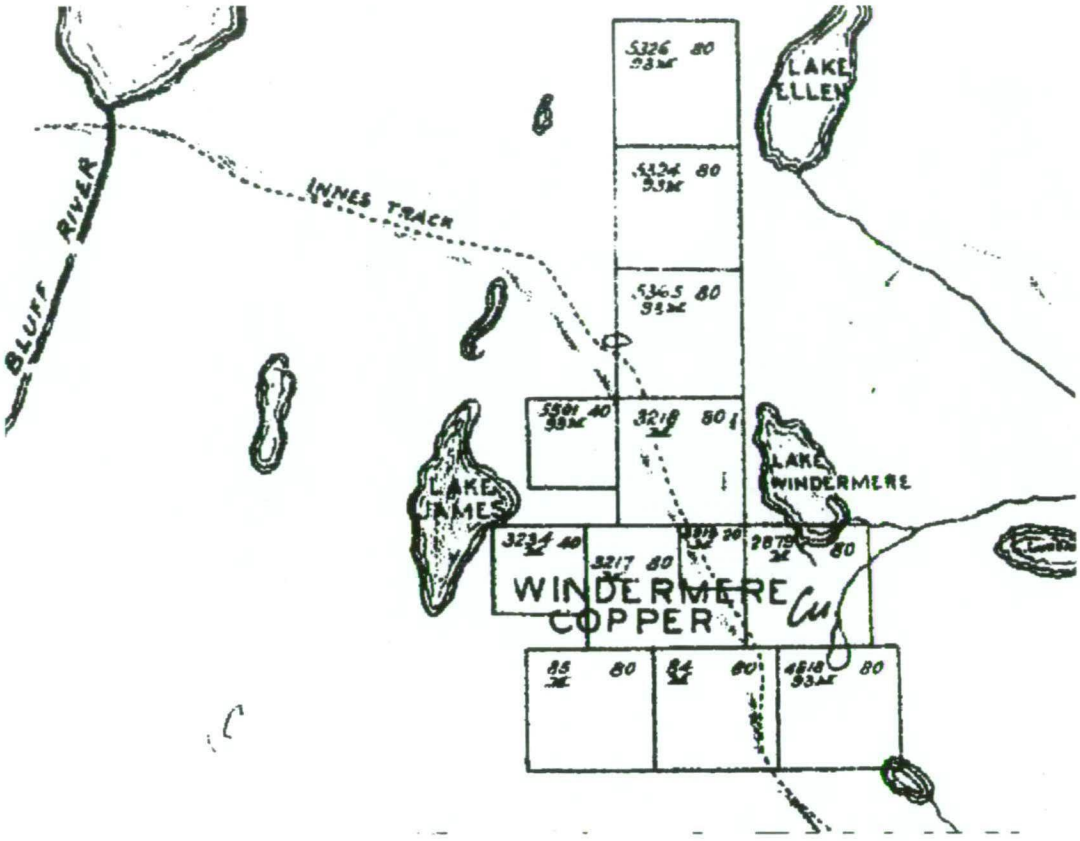

Figure 1-30 Section of County Chart at Lake Windermere Showing Mineral Leases and Track (Mineral Resources Tasmania 1940)

Figure 1-31 Topographical Map with Mineral Leases & Track Superimposed

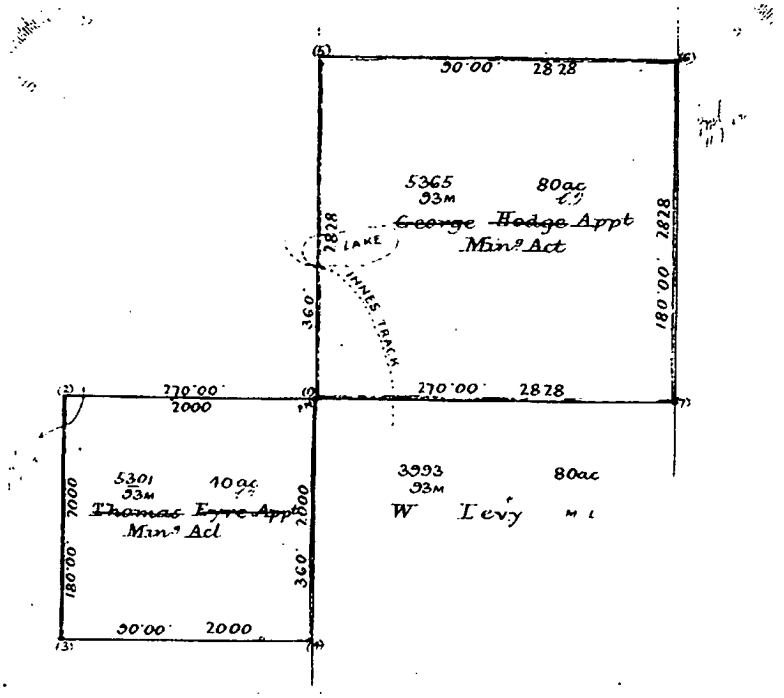

Figure 1-32 Detail of Mineral Lease Survey, Lake Windermere[57]

The Mount Black mineral leases, Figure 1.33, were transferred onto current maps of the area to give a line where the track should be located, Figure 1.34. Because much of this was on the lease of the currently operating Rosebery mine, I gained permission to enter the site. I arrived at the most accessible search area and immediately found a bulldozed track along the predicted alignment of the track. I followed it to a cleared section of original pack track and continued until it was lost on flat ground. A similar search of the northern slopes of Mount Black also resulted in a section of track being found. On a later trip I followed this track towards Tullah and found another bulldozed road along the predicted alignment of the track. The road was followed until it disappeared under Lake Rosebery. The route had been modified for exploration or dam construction. It was on the track because it was where it was shown on the mineral surveys and the grades and contouring were consistent with the Mole Creek Track.

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57 County of Lincoln, Vicinity of Barn Bluff, Mineral Survey, 5365 93M, 5301 93M, Folio 2, Page 30, 1902.

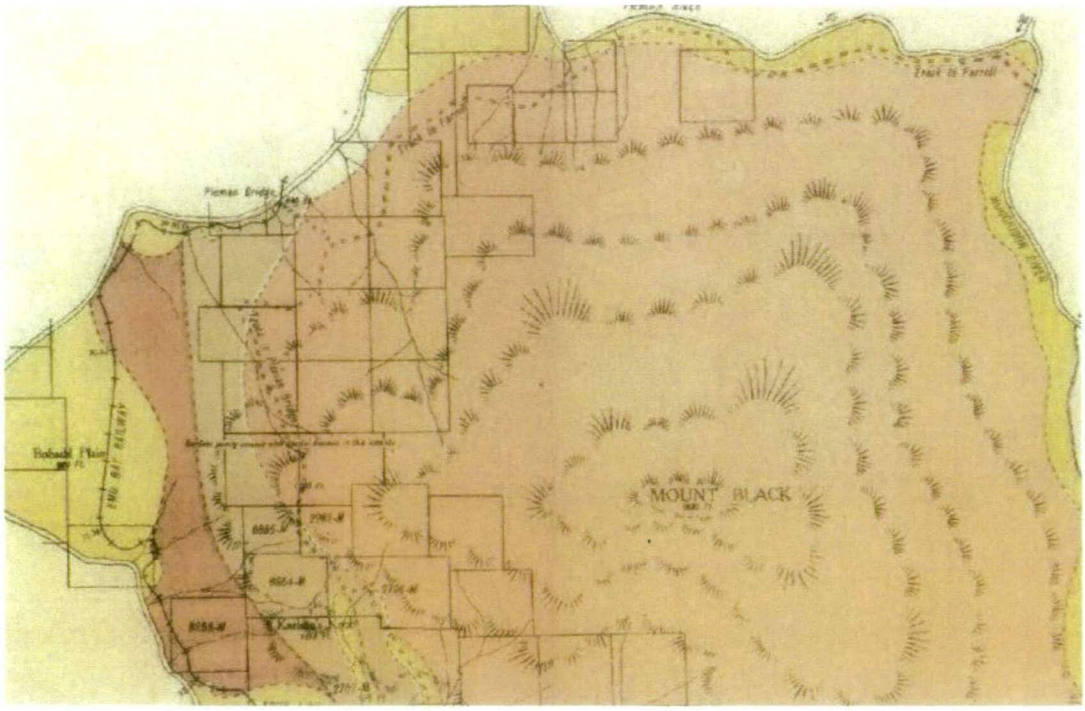

Figure 1-33 Section of Rosebery Mineral Chart (Loftus Hills 1915)

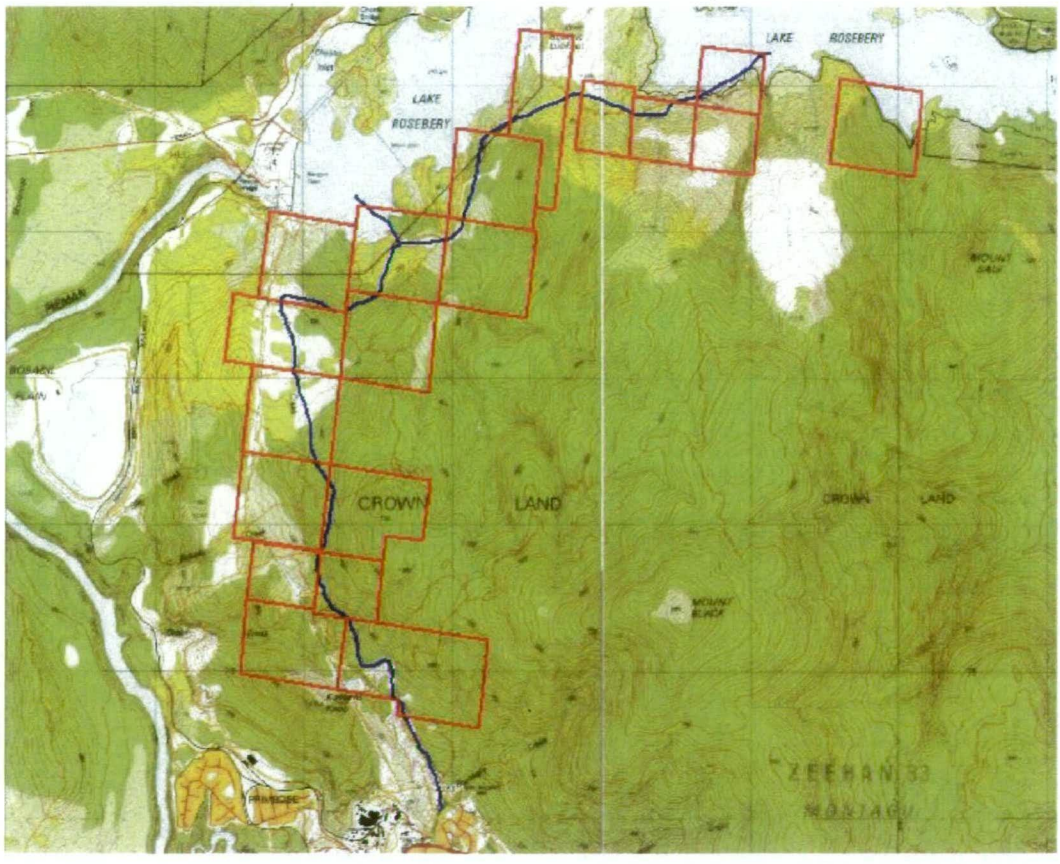

Figure 1-34 Current Topographical Map with Mineral Leases and Track Superimposed

Only limited sections of the track appeared on surveys. Aerial photographs, however, gave me fairly accurate information over large areas of country. Some showed features suggesting the presence of the track, such as a linear absence of trees in forests, disturbances in the ground or linear changes in the type of vegetation. A series of aerial photographs from the 1940s were the most useful because the track was less affected by regrowth, but some features were still evident on Google Earth. However, the ability of aerial photographs to show features varied greatly. Some subtle artefacts could be seen, but some substantial disturbances could not be seen at all. As with all the other sources of information, aerial photographs were invaluable for some parts of the track, but they could not be used to locate the track universally. They were another part of the jigsaw of information.

The least effective archival material were reports and newspapers because they were purely descriptive. I found modern and archival descriptions for the full length of the track, but they were only useful where they gave detailed information on the route or described distinctive features.

An example of where the descriptive accounts could be useful was at Mount Swallow, a little east of Tullah. I used every method available to build up the location of the track. A mineral county chart, which is a very imprecise map, showed the route of the Mole Creek Track between Mount Swallow and Granite Tor rather than the generally understood location south of Granite Tor.[58] But this was not enough for any effective field work. The key was a bushwalking article about a trip in 1940. The track was said to follow a distinctive feature, a '300

58 Mt Inglis Mineral Chart, 146, Department of Mines Tasmania.

yard ridge', on the slopes of Mount Swallow.[59] In a walk to the northern side of Mount Swallow I found the ridge and a track leading to it, but it was soon lost in thick bush. Returning from the ridge to the boat, I found a short section of overgrown benched track at the bottom of Mount Swallow near the edge of Lake Mackintosh. Now I had two known points at the top and the bottom of the mountain. By understanding the grades that were used and the habits of the track makers, I could estimate the route between the two. Another field trip followed to focus on where steep cross-grades would require deep sidling cutting for the track, which would make easier to find. It was then a question of conducting a series of zig-zag sweeps to try to intersect the track. Once I located this well benched track I followed it from Lake Mackintosh to the northern side of Mount Swallow. Apart from tree-falls and bands of thick bush, the track was almost untouched by later activity. It had all the hallmarks of the Mole Creek Track, it was about six feet wide, had gentle grades and was otherwise consistent with the other sections of the track.

With this part established, it was time to push up the Brougham River valley towards Granite Tor. An exploration map from the 1980s showed some of the route.[60] This time the approach was to intersect a part of the cleared exploration grid and follow that until it crossed the Mole Creek Track, as marked on their charts. The track was cleared but for only a few miles. However, the heavily overgrown track was found between Mount Swallow and Granite Tor by

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59 Shaw and Crawn, "The Innes Track", 36;
The article states that it is a 3,000 foot ridge but Crawn corrected this in a discussion with the author.

60 D Speijers, Shell Company of Australia, E.L. 2/78 Granite Tor Location of Brougham & Romulus East Grids, February 16, 1982, Mineral Resources of Tasmania.

perseverance and multiple field trips. Again, the track was identified as the Mole Creek Track because of the style of its construction.

Figure 1-35 Brougham River Valley viewed from the East with Mt Swallow and Mt Farrell (Brown 2000)

One last piece of field work will be discussed because it used original notes made by the PWD overseer, Richard Broomhall in 1898, to find a section of track that had been lost to local knowledge for decades. The line of the Mole Creek Track over the February Plains area had been a mystery which was not helped by the County Chart showing a vague line over an ill-defined landscape with the term 'sketched' added. There were no detailed surveys for this area with only the large scale map of Innes' survey route to indicate the location of the track.[61] Locals and historians with knowledge of this area believed that the Mole Creek Track lay on the western side of the February Plains where there was a rough marked track. However, this track was not to a standard of a pack track, for example it had no sign of benching, no culverts, and it was steep in places. The first step to finding the track here was discovering, in the Archives Office of Tasmania, a series of

61 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black".

files about expenditure under Public Works Execution Acts. This included the Mole Creek Track and contained a number of descriptive but vague reports by Overseer Broomhall.[62] The second step was the reports of Innes, Prichard and Beattie who described the track as being on the eastern side of the February Plains.[63] This prompted an attempt to fit Overseer Broomhall's description to an eastern approach to the February Plains.[64]

Broomhall only reported the type of work done at certain distances, but the type of work did give some strong clues. He would state the distance of vegetation cleared and work done, thus it was possible to know whether he had made the track through forest and whether it was climbing a hill or on the flat, but little else. I checked his descriptions against known work to validate the information. For example, he reported half a mile of steep sidling cutting between eight and 8.6 miles from Liena, which did correspond to the work and distance to Lemonthyme Hill from Liena. Using the last confirmed position of the track, at Borradaile Plains, I matched Broomhall's descriptions to the vegetation and the topography. And this could only fit if the track climbed through forest up the eastern side of the February Plains. But, field trips failed to find any track in the thick forest.

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62 *PWD 18/1/3430, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 61 Vic 17 Item 3756 – Track: Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge,* Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT).

63 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 4.
Prichard, "Westward Ho!, The Mole Creek Track, No.2",*Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898;
Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", xxvi.

64 Richard Broomhall to Secretary of Public Works, Report on work February 2 to April 2, April 2, 1898, *PWD 18/1/3430,* (AOT).

I turned to another source of information, an aerial photograph from 1946. This showed a possible line of disturbance in the forest in the original search area. I transferred the line onto a map for another, more focussed, search.[65] This search started badly, the predicted location of the track was crossed and recrossed in a series of sweeps but nothing was found. But finally another sweep revealed a section of benched track. Once found, the sometimes subtle features could be followed for a considerable distance both north and south through forest, including where the early sweeps had failed. This section of the track was undisturbed and could potentially provide an excellent source of information on how the track was made. The width and grades were all consistent with the Mole Creek Track.

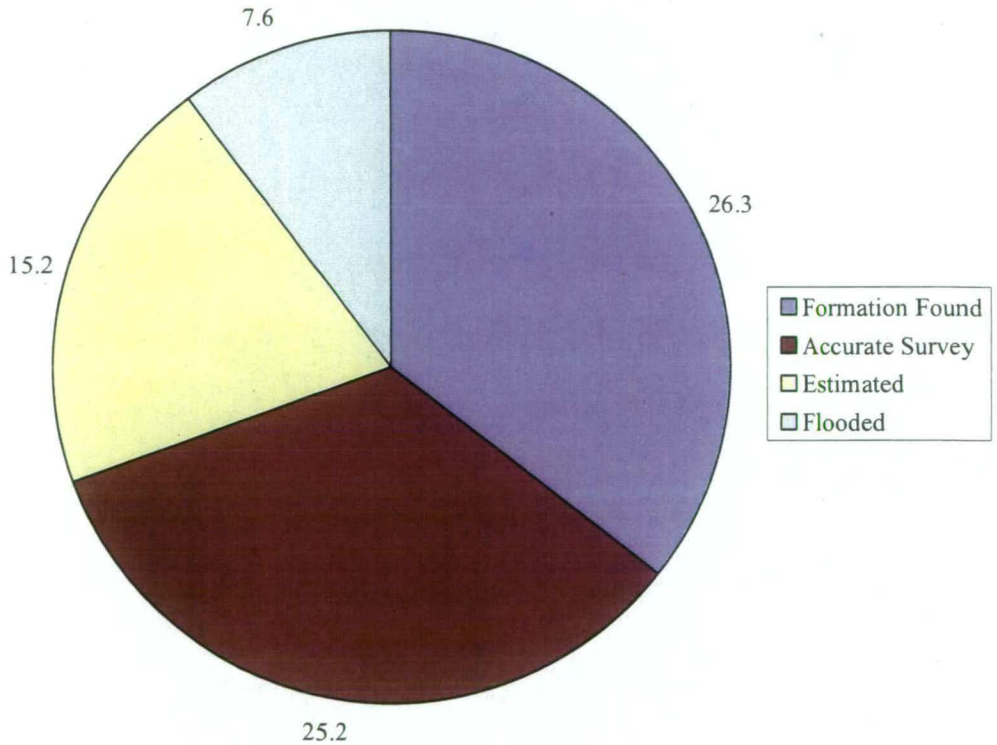


Figure 1-36 Distances of Track Identified by Each Method (in Miles)

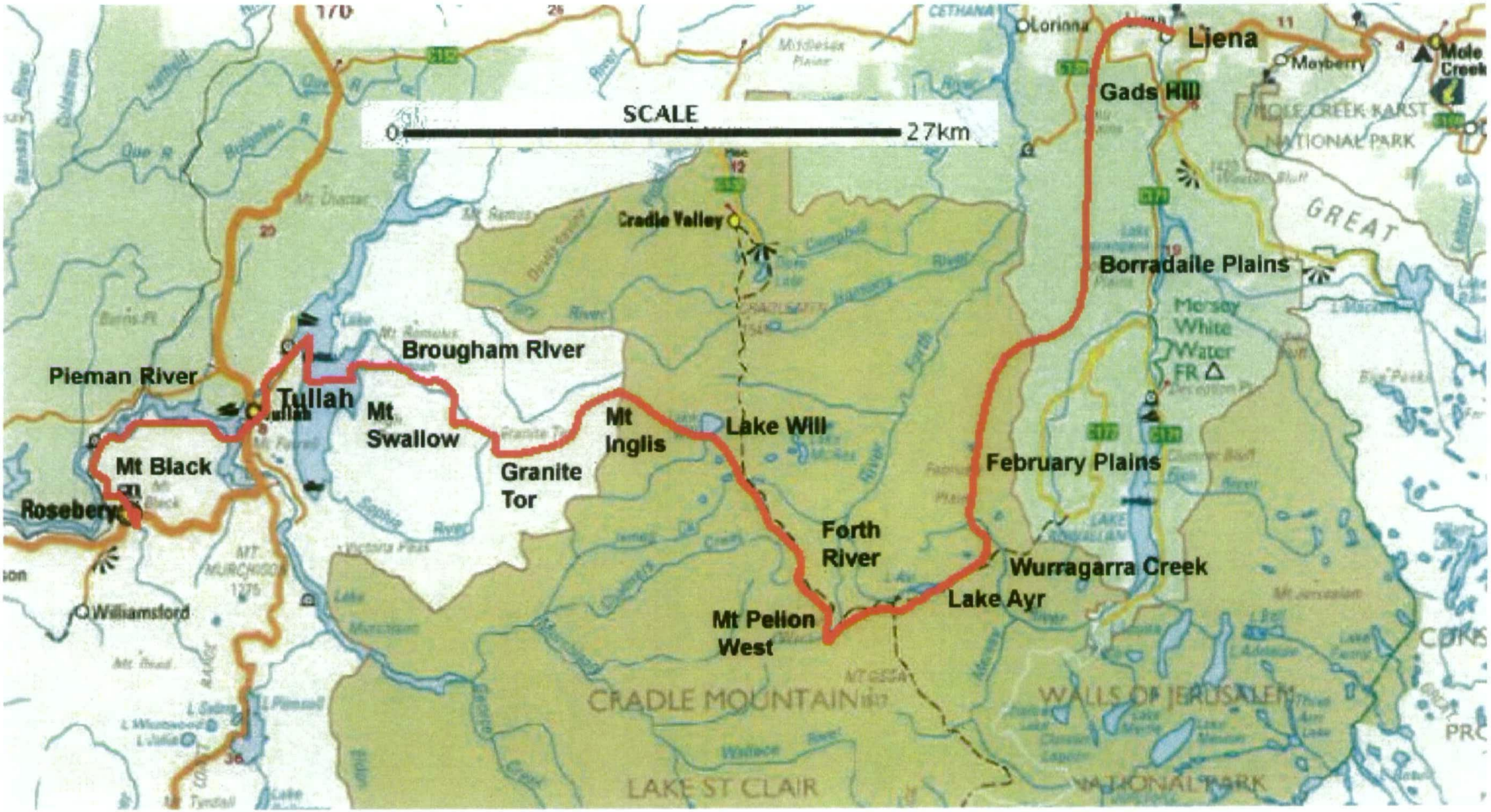
65 Aerial Photograph, Middlesex Run 1 Negative 2361, Lands Surveys, 1946.

The result of the work was that 51 ½ miles of the Mole Creek Track was found. The RNE had correctly identified 9 ½ miles. I had located 26.3 miles of formation and the location of the other 25.2 miles accurately from surveys where the formation could not been found or has been overrun by roads. 7 ½ miles of track lay under Lake Mackintosh and Lake Rosebery. The location of the remaining 15 miles can be estimated by interpolating from the known track and taking the most likely route in response to the country side.

Finding the track, particularly in the field, led to a greater understanding of how the track surveyor and makers responded to the topography. Some of this understanding can be rationally expressed such as the grades, use of solid ground and gentle curves of the track. But the extensive field work also resulted in a more emotional understanding of the "feel" of the track and its placement in the landscape. Finding the track also helped to develop a closer understanding of the people who made it.

It was important to find the track because this is an important first step for its heritage protection. The physical nature of the track will be examined in much more detail in a later chapter. We now know where the track ran and how I found it. We also know something of its landscape. The history of the track now needs to be examined to put it into its historical perspective.

Figure 1-37 View Looking South from the Divide (Brown 2007)



Map 1- Route of the Mole Creek Track

CHAPTER 2 SURVEYING THE TRACK

At the end of the nineteenth century the west coast of Tasmania had a real need for better trade routes to export its mineral produce and to receive supplies. There was no debate about this. But what was the most logical way to link it to its markets? One of the solutions was overland by rail with tracks pioneering the routes for railway lines. Regional jealousies were never far from the surface in Tasmania and in the war of the routes to the West, truth was indeed the first casualty.

The skills needed to find the best route for a railway, or track, through the unexplored high country of Tasmania could not be found in any one person. It needed the marriage of two complementary types of people, the professional surveyor and the local bushman. Teams of these men would bring the best results but at the same time it would bring tensions.

Tasmania in the late 1890s stood poised for prosperity from the minerals on its remote West Coast. There had already been the discovery of the "mountain of tin" at Mount Bischoff in 1871. This became a foot-hold in this rugged and unpopulated region and a base for track cutting for more prospecting and more discoveries.[1] They followed quickly; tin at Heemskirk 1877, silver at Zeehan in 1882, gold at Lynchford, 1881 and Mount Lyell in 1883, Dundas in 1886, Magnet in 1891, Mount Read 1893 and Rosebery 1894 were some of the bigger finds.[2] Each discovery generated a rush of prospectors, miners, investors and promoters.

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1 Nic Haygarth, *Baron Bischoff*, (Hong Kong, 2004).

2 Charles Whitham *Western Tasmania, A Land of Riches and Beauty,* (Queenstown: Board of Management Robert Sticht Memorial Library, 1949).

Many failed to live up to the hopes and exaggerations of the promoters, but many were rich. Even the failed mineral fields brought benefits, at a price, like more tracks, ports, wider exploration and more discoveries.

The focus of the West Coast moved south and changed its complexion as it moved. Mount Bischoff was rich in tin and spurred a search for more tin, which flowed to Heemskirk, 35 miles south. But then silver, in honour of Broken Hill, became the mineral of preference with Zeehan as the best of this phase. Gold was never out of favour. The first boom was Lynchford which was followed by Mount Lyell. But Mount Lyell was a poor gold mine, because the illusive gold was restricted to the thin cap of the "iron blow".[3] It may have been a disappointing gold mine, but below that cap was copper, and thousands of tons of it, enough to build furnaces in the forests, drive railways over hills and wide rivers and to make Queenstown a by-word for mineral wealth for more than 100 years.

On the West Coast, it did seem that wherever a prospector drove a pick or panned a stream there were rich minerals for the taking. It was true that the bush was thick and the weather was uncomfortable, but these were hardy men. There was just one barrier that stood between the owners of the rich mineral deposits and great wealth, access. This was not the question of a short road or a railway line across benign country. The Mount Lyell area has been called 'The Lost Province' and this could be equally applied to the whole West Coast.[4] Nature's perversity was to make the West Coast rich in minerals but to ring it with a barrier, and not

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3 Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, 6th ed. (Hobart: St. David's Park Publishing, 2000).

4 Lou Rae, "The Lost Province, Exploration, Isolation, Innovation and Domination in the Mount Lyell Region 1859-1935", (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005).

just of distance like many Australian mines, but of ruggedness. This was a ruggedness that few could appreciate.

Access from the sea was no solution. In the 1890s there were only two places that were worthy of the name harbour. Bathurst Harbour was too far south and the entrance to Macquarie Harbour was known, for good reason, as Hell's Gates, because of a shallow mouth, and a furious ebb tide.[5] Trial Harbour had been an early port for Heemskirk and Zeehan, but this small "hole in the rocks" was no place to shelter in the typically boisterous West Coast weather. Small ships, many no larger than yachts, entered the mouths of rivers, but this was no undertaking for any large ship and in anything other than the mildest seas.[6] Only Macquarie Harbour had any prospect of being a real port, and it was close to Mount Lyell and connected to Zeehan by railway.

Overland was little better. The highlands that ringed the West Coast were watered each year by feet of rain which fed fast flowing rivers and sculpted deep valleys. The rugged landscape was clothed in thick forests or large wet plains, and snow was common. But it was overland that the people of Hobart and Launceston saw the best option. The interest in routes to link Western Tasmania to the population centres at the height of the last "railway war" was very effectively summarised in a paper given to the Royal Society of Tasmania in

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5 Hamish Maxwell Stewart, *Closing Hell's Gates, the death of a convict station*, (Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 2008), 14.

6 Chris Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast,* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1988)

August 1896 by Thomas Stephens titled 'Land Routes for Exploration of the Western Country'.[7] His opened in a romantic vein:

> As in the legendary tales of old, and true histories of modern times, the heroes of exploration and adventure turn their faces to the setting sun; so those who seek to develop the little known mineral resources of Tasmania are turning to the West as to a Promised Land[8]

He described Tasmania as being a land of two halves, the fertile and populated eastern half, and the mineral rich and agriculturally poor western half. Continuing his flowery language, he first discussed some of the risks absent from exploration of the 'Western Country':

> The enterprising pioneer or prospector is free from the risk of encountering some of the perils immemorially associated with fable or in fact with the exploration of strange lands. Here are no dragons guarding the golden apples of the modern Garden of Hesperides; not even grizzly bears or man-eating tigers intent on prey, or savage tribes fighting for their native fastness.[9]

However, there were difficulties enough such as 'rugged and lofty ranges, difficult either to scale or to descend; deep ravines blocked with every imaginable kind of obstruction; or rivers difficult to cross at any time and sometimes rising in one night so as to cut off retreat for weeks'. But he reserved the greatest detail for what he considered the two worst 'foes' of a pioneer. They were 'representatives of the indigenous flora, the formidable "bauera" and "horizontal"'. The average explorer, he said, would only attempt to penetrate a mass of bauera if it was 'evidently a narrow one' or it involved 'a question of life or death'. "Horizontal" was different to bauera but was no less difficult to pass through.[10]

Stephens finally reached the real subject of his paper, the possible routes between central and western Tasmania, and abandoned his florid style. The first route he

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7 T Stephens, "Land Routes for Exploration of the Western Country", *Proceedings and Papers of Royal Society of Tasmania*, (1897): 189 – 196.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

described is the subject of this thesis. It followed 'the general direction of the Van Diemen's Land Company's old track, but bearing south after crossing the Mersey, and continuing on in a south-westerly direction between Barn Bluff and Mount Pelion to its final destination'.[11] He continued to describe the other alternatives.

The birth of the Mole Creek Track occurred about five months earlier when a long editorial was published in the *Launceston Examiner* on the 1 April 1896.[12] Frederick Prichard's article is worth examining in detail because it captures the rationale and the mood for direct routes. His editorial was largely a replay of the parochial and emotional arguments of the "railway war" of the early 1890s. It had ended prematurely with a depression, collapse of mining investment and the fall of the Van Diemen's Land Bank in 1891.[13] Prichard first appealed to parochialism, beginning 'now that the West Coast mineral fields are once more coming to the front, the question of overland communication with them is again exercising the minds of our friends in the capital'. He felt that Southern Tasmania had already captured a lot of the trade with the West Coast because of the 'lack of enterprise on the part of Launceston business' and 'if the same apathy continues more and more of it will filter through southern channels'. Harking back to the previous "railway war", he reminded his readers that 'a couple of years back there was a good deal of enthusiasm about opening up, first a stock route and then making a road or light railway via Mole Creek'.[14]

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11 Ibid.

12 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 1, 1896.

13 Railway Wars is a term used by Geoffrey Blainey in the 1953 *Peaks of Lyell* and adopted by later authors to describe the competition for railways to the West Coast.

14 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 1, 1896

For Prichard, Mole Creek was 'the first link in the iron chain that was to connect the Western Eldorado with the railway system of the colony' and it would be 'an impetus to trade that would be felt in every farm and trade centre of this part of the island'.[15] He proposed to make a 'decent track' and 'trade would soon spring up', and then 'if sufficient energy is shown then there is nothing to prevent the original idea' of a railway to the West Coast from Mole Creek being realised. Prichard envied the energy and progress of the nearby Deloraine Improvement Association (DIA), which also wanted a track to the West Coast and he lamented Launceston's lack of support for it. The route the DIA wanted was from Deloraine to Queenstown via the Western Tiers and the Linda Track.[16] Perhaps Prichard formed the views in his editorial independently, or he may have given voice to a rising interest among the businessmen of Launceston, but this long and strident editorial marked the first step of the chain of events that resulted in the Mole Creek Track.

Launceston's business class stirred quickly and in just over a week 'a representative and influential meeting of the leading citizens' was held at Mr Sutton's Coffee Palace.[17] Coffee houses were the teetotallers' version of a hotel, and Samuel Sutton was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, alderman, former mayor, Member of the House of Assembly and the man who brought electricity to Launceston.[18] The subject of the meeting was 'opening up more direct communication with the West Coast silver-fields' via Mole Creek. The

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15 Ibid.

16 "The Western Tier – Linda Track", *Launceston Examiner*, April 1, 1896.

17 "North and West Coast Direct Route Association", *Launceston Examiner*, April 10, 1896.

18 Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10453b.htm (accessed September 26, 2010).

'leading citizens' were supported by two Zeehan residents, who claimed that a direct route 'would meet the cordial sympathy from the West Coasters'.[19] The result was that an association was formed and named 'The North and West Coast Direct Route Association' with Mr SJ Sutton appointed chairman and Mr Alex Webster Secretary.[20]

Prichard fanned the interest in a direct route in more editorials and published supportive articles such as: 'Zeehan's Opinion – Mole Creek the Best' and letters from the DIA.[21] By 16 April, the North and West Coast Direct Route Association (NWDRA) had met with the DIA in Deloraine about possible collaboration and information. As well as Deloraine's own leading citizens, bush-farmers William Aylett senior and junior also attended this meeting. They were two of the few men who knew the country west of Mole Creek. William Aylett senior had been a packer for the Mole Creek and Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Company (MCZMPEC) over three summers with his son William, as well as Joseph Will, Con Russell and A Petrie.[22] William Aylett junior also had many years experience in this country, including the 1890-91 Mole Creek and Zeehan Railway survey, and he would go on to be associated with the Mole Creek Track for the next 30 years. He immediately offered to find and mark a track from Mole Creek to Zeehan, and said that he would take three weeks and £27 to

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19 "North and West Coast Direct Route Association", *Launceston Examiner*, April 10, 1896.

20 Ibid.

21 RW McGowan, "Overland Route to the West Coast", *Launceston Examiner*, April 11, 1896;
"Route to the West Coast, Comparative Figures, Zeehan's Opinion, Mole Creek the Best", *Launceston Examiner*, April 13, 1896;
"Communication with West Coast, Movement in the North", *Launceston Examiner,* April 13, 1896;
Editorial, *Launceston Examiner,* April 14, 1896.

22 "Communication with West Coast", *Launceston Examiner*, April 16, 1896.

do the job with two other men.[23] Sensibly he withdrew his offer, probably because he realised that the task was much more difficult than he had first thought, but he offered to assist a 'qualified surveyor' to find the route.[24]

Prichard increased the pressure for the track by finding more advantages for the Mole Creek route. He claimed that it would help the Northern farmers because the track would run through wheat, potato, sheep and cattle districts.[25] It would also, in Prichard's opinion, not only allow access to the mineral wealth of the West Coast but it would also open up new mineral fields as 'it is also well known that a large section of the country lying between Rosebery and Mole Creek is rich in minerals'. Gold, silver, copper and coal had already been found in this area, which is now largely the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park. Prichard also added that access to 'huge quantities of useful timber, good agricultural land and summer pastures' would be other benefits of the track.[26] Most of his claims were plausible but the statement that 'no serious engineering difficulties present themselves' to make a track was clearly not supported by any reliable information, first-hand knowledge or subsequent events. However, it would be years before this and the other claims would be tested.

Another meeting of the now energised NWDRA was held in Launceston on 20 April. Their first topic was Southern agitation for another route to the West Coast. This was quickly dismissed by an anonymous expert who painted the

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23 "Communication with West Coast", *Launceston Examiner*, April 18, 1896; "Communication with West Coast", *Launceston Examiner*, April 16, 1896.

24 "Communication with West Coast", *Launceston Examiner*, April 18, 1896.

25 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 13, 1896.

26 Ibid.

country along the southern route as 'doubtless the largest tract of useless country in Tasmania consisting of a group of mountains which is for many months of the year one vast desert of snow and ice for scores of miles'.[27] The benefits of a route west from Mole Creek were discussed again and two options put forward. The first was via the Mount Pelion area to Mount Black, through the body of the Cradle Mountain –Lake St Clair National Park, and the second was further north along the old Van Diemen's Land Company road to Middlesex Plains, passing north of Cradle Mountain. The meeting resolved that the NWDRA would work for the 'most direct route from Launceston to the West Coast mineral field' and seek government support on a £1 for £1 basis to a road.[28]

The NWDRA's ties with the DIA cooled, but remained cordial, as it became clear that they would continue with their preferred route and as the NWDRA's preference for a route via Mole Creek solidified.[29] The DIA progressed with their route over the Western Tiers, but not without internal problems like a skirmish with Daniel Griffin, a vocal and strong-willed man of many talents and opinions, over the payment for marking a route. Griffin had offered to do the job for the Government, but when the DIA became involved, he was incensed and made 'uncalled for and insulting statements' about the DIA committee.[30] The result was that both the Minister for Lands and Works, Alfred Pillinger, and the DIA refused to pay Griffin. He soon became embroiled in the discussions on the route of the track from Mole Creek. Griffin had more influence than many

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27 "Westward Ho! Communication with the West Coast, Northern Association Formed", *Launceston Examiner*, April 21, 1896.

28 Ibid.

29 "Westward Ho! North and West Direct Route Association, Progressive Actions, A Route to be Marked Out", *Launceston Examiner,* April 24, 1896.

30 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner,* April 25, 1896.

because of his pioneering exploration in this country and because he was the local correspondent for the *Mercury*. This gave him a forum to express his opinions, air his many grievances and pursue his long vendettas.

The people in Hobart had indeed been active. Their Tasmanian League saw themselves as acting in the interests of Tasmania, rallying against the 'Victorian capitalists' who were 'reaping the advantage of the mineral wealth of Tasmania while Tasmanians were sitting quietly aside and doing nothing to help themselves'.[31] The reality was, in their view, that the best interests of Tasmania coincided completely with the best interests of Hobart businesses and so the meeting endorsed that 'direct communication should exist between Hobart and the West Coast'. Rhetoric from the Tasmanian League, DIA and the NWDRA was all much the same, their proposals were similar as was their rationale, just the best route and who comprised their enemies changed.

This conflict about tracks was a part, an almost insignificant part, of the intense battle for the access to the West Coast. An alternative was harbour works to make the mouth of Macquarie Harbour safe, and it was a good solution for the West Coast. But it was treason for the people in Hobart and Launceston. They could see that ships would sail out of Tasmania and to ports in the other colonies or overseas. On the other hand, a railway, especially linked to your nearest city, would make goods cheaper on the West Coast, reduce shipping costs of ores and benefit the region at the other end of that railway. Two additional elements turned this from the next-best logical solution to hysteria: regional interests and

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31 "Westward Ho! Communication with the West Coast, Northern Association Formed", *Launceston Examiner*, April 21, 1896.

railway syndicates. The strength of regional interests can be seen clearly in Prichard's editorials, and would remain a part of the story of the Mole Creek Track for many years. But the competing railway syndicates inflamed the already emotional arguments. If a promoter's syndicate was successful then it would make money selling shares in the company, gain concessions over large parts of the country and make more money out of the operation of the railway. The "railway wars" became so intense that they almost brought down the Tasmanian government, and were to continue for another 20 years.[32]

The "direct routes" were a part of the "railway wars", albeit a very small part, for a number of reasons. They were seen as the vanguard of the railways. Firstly a track could open up the country where a railway line might run. And if the track became a successful trade route it would justify a railway. They called this "crawling before you run". The passion that fuelled the competition for railways spilled over into discussion on the direct routes.

Beyond these reasons, the agitators for the direct routes liked to boost their favourite route with as many grand claims as possible. One often-used claim was that tracks would open up Tasmania's remote areas, where everyone believed rich mineral deposits lay waiting for the prospectors' pick.

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32 The Railway Wars were first examined by Blainey and further examined by Rae and Jetson. Their descriptions give some idea of the tumult that this competition caused
Blainey, *Peaks of Lyell*, 112;
Lou Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast*, (Moonah: Rae, 1984);
Tim Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise; A History of the Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve to May 1922" (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005), 207.

The parochial conflict of the railway wars, and much else, was played out by three centres: Hobart, Launceston and the North-West. What the West Coast wanted, or needed, was of little interest when viewed through the prism of regional self interest. Tracks even split the parochial competition between regions into arguments between towns in the same region. Deloraine's DIA was an example of strong local independence and they were joined by other towns, such as Cressy, Sheffield and Bothwell, and their preferred paths to the 'western Eldorado'.[33] The fact that cattle and people were already heading to the West Coast along established routes from the North-West did not interest the people of central Tasmania.[34] Central Tasmania, that fertile strip of country from Launceston to Hobart, had its own interests and they were not to be denied.

To return to Launceston and the NWDRA, Prichard published another editorial in the *Launceston Examiner* at the end of April, this time adding some statistics to the argument. He gave mileages and lists of benefits for each of the routes to the West Coast, including the hypothetical mineral wealth along the way.[35] Naturally these facts favoured the routes from Mole Creek. The route via the Mount Pelion region was portrayed as particularly attractive because the MCZMPEC track 'well opened up' 42 of the 59 miles that was said to be needed to close the link. And the Mole Creek and Zeehan Railway survey along part of this route added to its pedigree. Prichard again asked the citizens of Launceston to demonstrate self-reliance by supporting the NWDRA with money, which would, he said, be

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33 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 1, 1896.

34 People and cattle used the routes from the North-West extensively, but they have largely been ignored by historians, except for Tim Jetson's detailed accounts. *It's a Different Country Down There; A History of Droving in Western Tasmania*, (Circular Head Bicentenary Project Team, 2004).

35 "Current Topics", *Launceston Examiner*, April 28, 1896.

appreciated by the government when 'the "battle of the routes" comes to be fought out'.[36]

The NWDRA turned talk into action when they sent Con Russell, leading a small group including William Aylett junior, to look at two routes from Mole Creek. On 28 April, Russell and his group headed out into the Tasmanian highlands expecting to be away for a few weeks. However, it was two months before they returned to Launceston. A journey into this elevated and exposed country this late in the season was risky, as Russell and Aylett would have known from their years with the MCZMPEC. The NWDRA must have thought that this work was urgent to send them out into the highlands at this time of year. They sent the bushmen, at their expense, to find their routes and then they would be checked by a surveyor at the Government's expense. Much the same was happening in the South, but they had convinced the government not only to pay for an expedition, but for it to be led by surveyor. The Government's gullibility was obvious when they agreed to send a District Surveyor, Edward George Innes, and a small party into the South-Western Tasmania in winter. [37]

Con Russell reported to the NWDRA on 30 June that both routes from Mole Creek were practical.[38] He had followed the MCZMPEC track through the Pelion area to Granite Tor and then continued west across the untracked valley of the Sophia River, turned north around Mount Farrell and then on to Rosebery. The flooded Murchison River had blocked him going directly from Mount Farrell

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36 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 25, 1896.

37 Editorial, *Mercury*, May 14, 1896.

38 "Westward Ho! Mr Russell's Report, A Route Found", *Launceston Examiner*, July 1, 1896.

to Rosebery. Russell returned along the northern route via the Middlesex Plains and the old VDL road. He thanked his travelling companion, William Aylett, and submitted an account for £93.

Russell's success spurred the NWDRA to debate the two routes that he had 'marked'. Con Russell and Thomas McDonald (the discoverer of the Rosebery mineral field) preferred the northern route via the Middlesex Plains. Others, mainly William Aylett, supported the southern route via the Mount Pelion area. But then Daniel Griffin weighed into the debate. He thought that the route via the Mount Pelion region wasn't practical and that the northern alternative was 'meant by God and nature' to be the way to the West Coast.[39] These comments marked the start of his long vocal involvement with the Mole Creek Track. The NWDRA couldn't decide between the two routes so they asked the Minister of Lands to send a surveyor to examine both.

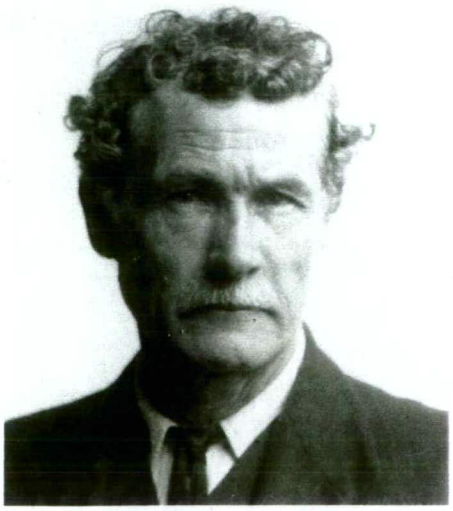

Figure 2-1 William Aylett

Figure 2-2 Daniel Griffin

39 "North and West Direct Route Association, Report of Sub-Committee", *Launceston Examiner,* August 3, 1896.

The NWDRA made a 'modest and perfectly reasonable request' to the Minister for Lands, Alfred Pillinger, but his response was paltry compared to what was being spent on the Southern routes. He was in the process of approving £1,600 to upgrade the Linda Track, the existing route from the South to the West Coast, and within the previous two weeks an expensive government expedition had returned from trying to find a route through the South-West.[40] Pillinger offered the NWDRA £100 to spend as they 'thought fit'.[41] The West Coast's *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* wanted the Minister to reconsider the NWDRA's request otherwise there was 'good reason to open the cry of "North versus South"'.[42] Pillinger did reflect and within the week he approved sending a surveyor to examine the Northern route. This would be Edward George Innes, who had just returned from the difficult winter expedition in the South-West.[43] Innes completed the report on the South-West trip in late August and was ready to go back out into the Tasmanian mountains.[44]

While the Launceston interests were happy for the moment, Hobart, in the guise of the Tasmanian League, now wanted the government to spend £1,500 to make a track from Tyenna, near Maydena, to the Gordon River, 'or some other track south of the Linda Track that would connect Hobart with the silver fields'. They were undaunted by the absence of an identified route and the recent failure of EG

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40 "The Gordon Expedition, Thrilling Experiences, Return of the Explorers", *Mercury*, August 8, 1896;
FW Trappes to Packer, August 11, 1896, *PWD 18/1/3130, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 60 Vic 45 Item 3429 - Track, Marlborough to Mount Lyell, (deviation at Mount Arrowsmith,* AOT.

41 "Way to the West", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, August 17, 1896.

42 "Way to the West", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* August 17, 1896.

43 "House of Assembly", *Launceston Examiner*, August 21, 1896.

44 EG Innes, "Route to the West: Report of Mr Surveyor Innes upon the Country between Mount Humboldt and the Head of the Navigable Water upon the Gordon", *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP),* Report 74 of 1897, (August 25, 1896).

Innes to find one. Their explanation was that Innes, the experienced bush surveyor, 'went the wrong way' because he followed instructions other 'than those given by the league'. In a touch of magnanimity, they resolved that the government should support tracks to the West Coast from the South, and the North.[45] However, when a motion to this effect was put to the House of Assembly, the support for the Northern route was removed. Pillinger resolved the problem by promising funds for both Southern and Northern routes from his discretionary budget.[46]

Prichard was not in a magnanimous mood. He attacked the funding for the Southern routes, because he said there was no practical way to the West Coast from Hobart and said that to continue to advocate for one was 'foolish'. He also saw improving the Linda Track as unwarranted. His editorial turned again to the virtues of a route from Mole Creek to the West Coast. [47] By contrast HR Nicholls, the editor of the *Mercury,* committed a long editorial to condemning the Minister of Lands 'extraordinary misrepresentations and misstatements', before laying out what he considered to be 'the facts as they stand'.[48] He then described the great advantages of the proposed southern route to the West Coast.

Now routes to the West Coast were to be found from both the North and South. EG Innes was sent out from Mole Creek for the North, and Burrows, Marsden, Trappes, Meredith and Frodsham, each in charge of a survey party, were sent out

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45 "The Way to the West", *Mercury*, September 15, 1896.

46 *Journals of the House of Assembly, Votes and Proceedings*, Session II 1896, No.40, (September 18, 1896): 190;
"House of Assembly", *Launceston Examiner*, September 19, 1896.

47 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, September 18, 1896

48 Editorial, *Mercury*, September 19, 1896.

across the South-West to find a practical route for the Southern interests.[49] Throughout this period of route-hunting, the progress reports of the surveyors were printed in the newspapers, both Northern and Southern, often verbatim, and editorials and letters to the editor would interpret and argue over every nuance of each of the routes.[50]

EG Innes Marks a Route

The request by the NWDRA for a surveyor to examine Russell's two routes was in keeping with a general understanding of the time, which was that bushmen may know their country, and they may be able to make rough bush tracks, but they couldn't be relied on for the more subtle job of finding the route for a pack track or a road. The best person to do this was a good surveyor with experience in the bush and knowledge of the competing needs of a good pack track. Many district surveyors had this experience and, despite the hard work involved, it had the attraction of being a good steady income for the duration of the survey. The leader of the expedition was paid a fixed weekly sum for the costs of the survey, which was much better than the piece-meal income they got for making land surveys in their district. For this survey, Innes received £18 a week for him and his party of two men. Russell, who went as his guide, got £4 per week and Innes' brother Josiah received £3 per week when he later joined the survey.[51] Tools,

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49 Chris Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, (Devonport: Taswegia, 1989): 235-254.

50 "The Way to the West", *Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 1896;
Editorial, *Mercury,* December 1, 1896.

51 EG Innes to Packer, August 21, 1897, *PWD18/1/3132 Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 60 Vic 45 Item 3431 - Tracks and Emergent Works, West Coast*, AOT.
Packer to Innes, January 16, 1897, *PWD2/121/31, Letterbooks of general outwards correspondence,* AOT.

packing and other incidentals were provided at government cost. This was good money compared to the average weekly rural wage (including food) of 13s 6d (about two thirds of a pound). Even the Secretary for Public Works was only paid £7 a week. [52]

When the 42 year old Edward George Innes started the survey of the route from Mole Creek he had 28 years experience in the Tasmanian bush, mainly in his southern survey district of Franklin, based at Cygnet. He had worked on the West Coast to help with a backlog of mining surveys and did a number of track and road surveys in the South-West, one to the Gordon River and another to Port Davey.[53] Innes was also a captain in the Derwent Infantry Regiment, a keen sailor and active in the local road trust and board of health.[54] In the bush, Innes could maintain his status even though he lived and worked closely with his men. He tells us that he worked hard on the survey, and that 'to make a good job' he had to 'bust up every inch of the line myself'. [55] Innes was prepared to publicly pass judgement over others in his party. He was clearly the leader of the survey party and derived his authority from both the status given to him and the respect that he earned by hard work. After his sudden death, about eight years later, he was described as kind, courteous and genial.[56]

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52 Shayne Breen, Contested Places, *Tasmania's Northern Districts from ancient times to 1900*, (Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2001), 98.

53 Glyn Roberts, *Metal Mining in Tasmania, 1804 to 1914*, (Launceston: Bokprint, 2007), 326
Innes, "Route to the West: Report of Mr Surveyor Innes upon the Country between Mount Humboldt and the Head of the Navigable Water upon the Gordon".
Ralph Gowlland & Kathleen Gowlland, *Trampled Wilderness; The History of South-West Tasmania*, (New Norfolk: Richmond Printers, 1986), 107

54 Gowlland, *Trampled Wilderness*, 107
"Late Mr Innes", *Weekly Courier*, August 13, 1904.

55 EG Innes to Surveyor General, February 25, 1897, *LSD42 Correspondence with District Surveyors and with Other Departments*, AOT.

56 "South Bruni", *Mercury*, August 15, 1904.

The local district surveyor, Henry Chalmers, knew the country fairly well and he had done a few road and track surveys and he had wanted the job, mainly because there was little survey work in his district. However, he was passed over for Innes, probably because his earlier road surveys had been expensive failures and he performed poorly in his job.[57] It is not surprising that he became one of Innes' critics.

Innes' party was: his guide, Con Russell; packer, William Aylett; and his brother Josiah as a bushman and two bushmen from the South, Bradshaw and Rowe. For seven months he worked next to Bradshaw and Rowe, but he only named them once in his report, without giving even the initial of their first names, and gave them no thanks or credit. Typically he referred to them as 'the party' or 'men'. As was the practice of the time, Innes, the professional and leader, had a status above that of his men, including his brother. A stark example was that Innes went first class by train when his men, including his brother, travelled second class.[58]

The Secretary of Public Works, Henry Packer, issued Innes with his instructions on 16 October, which directed him to examine the two routes proposed by the NWDRA and report whether it would be possible 'to obtain a practical line for a track or road at an approximate grade of not more than 1 in 10'.[59] He also had to report on the country and his route was to be 'properly blazed through the forest

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57 EG Innes, "Correspondence, Mole Creek Track to Mount Black, Mr Innes in reply to Mr Chalmers", *Launceston Examiner*, August 18, 1897.
HJ Chalmers, "Survey District of Mersey, Lands and Survey Report for the year 1896" *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)*, No. 48 (1896), 21.

58 Secretary Public Works to Station Master Launceston, *October 20, 1896, PWD 2/124/151,* AOT.

59 Packer to Innes, October 16, 1896, *PWD 2/124/145 Letterbooks of General Outward Correspondence*, AOT.

and staked out through open country'.[60] He was told to meet with the NWRDA, to cooperate with them and 'to carry out their wishes'.[61]

Figure 2-3 Gordon River Exploration Party, (left to right) HM Nicholls, J Innes, EG Innes and E Woolley (*Tasmanian Mail*, May 30, 1896)

Innes lacked local knowledge, which was one reason why he was guided by Con Russell, but Innes also prepared himself before he left the South. He consulted his assistant, Hiller, who had worked on the Mole Creek and Zeehan Railway survey five years earlier.[62] As Innes passed through Hobart on his way to Launceston, he took a copy of a map of the area from the Lands Survey

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 "Correspondence", *Launceston Examiner*, August 18, 1897.

Department. This map, Figure 2.4, was the current understanding of the country, but it was wildly inaccurate.[63]

Figure 2-4 Detail from Innes' Field Chart (Map Showing Track from Zeehan to Liena by EG Innes, QVMAG, 1958:81.3)

Innes left from Hobart with Rowe and Bradshaw on the evening train on 19 October, arriving at Launceston the next morning and met with the NWDRA that day. He left the following day by train for Mole Creek with Con Russell as well.[64] Arrangements had already been made for their equipment, tents and food, to be waiting for them at Mole Creek. Innes decided to look at the southern route via the Mount Pelion region first and only examine the second route if it was not practicable. He expected the work to take nine to twelve weeks.[65]

Innes' report covers the survey in great detail and has become the basis for much of the current understanding of the Mole Creek Track and, as such, does not need

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63 Map Showing Track From Zeehan to Liena by EG Innes, 1958:81.3, QVMAG

64 "Current Topics, Westward Ho!". *Launceston Examiner*, October 21, 1896.

65 "Current Topics, Westward Ho!" *Launceston Examiner*, October 21, 1896.

to be repeated here. However, his official report should not be read uncritically. Other sources, including Innes' regular progress reports, give a more complex story that shows Innes as more fallible than a superficial reading of his final report suggests.

At Mole Creek Innes met William Aylett junior, who was the packer for the survey party. The group was now formed, EG Innes, Con Russell, Bradshaw and Rowe with Aylett carrying supplies, but based in Mole Creek. Work started in earnest on Monday 26 October about 3 miles from Liena on an old road to Gad's Hill which Innes mistakenly called 'Griffin's Road'.[66] The first part of the route was an already well established track south to the Borradaile Plains and Innes took Aylett with him to examine the next nine to ten miles. The survey reached the Borradaile Plains by 7 November with minimal changes to the line of the old track other than just 'crossing and recrossing to straighten it'.[67] Russell felt that 'all was going well' with the track and even the weather was 'beautiful – all that we could desire'.[68]

From the Borradaile Plains Innes followed the MCZMPEC track south and here he made his first substantial change. Instead of following this track which climbed up to the higher February Plains, along the western side, he took the survey up its eastern flanks. In his report Innes said that he wanted to avoid 'some ugly country', although he described his alternative as passing through 'a dense growth of myrtle (*Fagus Cunn.*) and pepper-tree'. This part of Innes'

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66 EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", *JPPP* 37, Paper 43, (August 3, 1897), 3.

67 Ibid.

68 C Russell, "Current Topics, Westward Ho!", *Launceston Examiner*, November 11, 1896.

survey line was abandoned within a few years because it was frequently blocked by tree falls. Superficially Innes' choice was odd, as some small changes to the MCZMPEC track would have found more open country and at a good grade.[69]

The key to Innes' decision here was in one of his regular progress reports. He wanted to avoid the elevated and open February Plains completely, saying that Russell's route crossed them 'some 3400 ft above [sea level] but if I can get through with the deviation that I spoke of in my last we shall not reach anything near that height until we get close to the Pelions'.[70] His later progress reports, and final report, did not admit to his failure to find this lower route. He abandoned this deviation and 'touched on the old track' on the February Plains at just the place he had wanted to avoid. He measured the altitude as 3,550 feet above see level.[71]

Although the February Plains were high and exposed, they were open, so Innes made quick progress south to the valley of Wurragarra Creek. Russell's route, the old MCZMPEC track, ran more to the west and then came down the southern side of, what was by this stage, the Oakleigh Range. The old route was not only steep but also crossed very rocky ground that would make track forming difficult.[72]

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69 A recent suggestion was that Innes had trouble finding a route due to fog but this is not supported by any comments by Innes, and he did make such comments later when the party was fog-bound near Granite Tor. Russell called the weather 'very favourable' except for 'a slight interruption of snow, rain and wind'.
T Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise; A History of the Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve to May 1922" (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005), 207;
EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 5;
"The Way to the West", *Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 1896.

70 "North & West Direct Route", *Launceston Examiner*, November 18, 1896.

71 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 4.

72 Ibid.

Innes' alternative had a good grade down into the Pelion Plains near Lake Ayr. This is now the line of the Arm River Track.

Innes 'expressed himself delighted with the beautiful Lake Ayr, with its picturesque surroundings of mountains and small well-grassed flats and glades'.[73] He played to the Northern interests when he compared this to his recent winter journey in the South-West and its 'miserable button grass flats'. His appreciation of the landscape, as well as the potential for exploitation of minerals and timber, showed a holistic understanding of the country. At the time, there was no contradiction in his delight in the beauty of the land around Lake Ayr and his description of it as potentially 'fine agricultural land'. The scenery became a theme that ran through Innes' reports, albeit often seen through the prism of the 'difficulties in the way of road-making'.[74] He called some country 'broken, ugly', and some forest was 'a dense growth of all the rubbish indigenous to this portion of Tasmania' and some plains he called 'sound'.

At Lake Ayr, Innes reached the Mole Creek and Zeehan Railway survey, which he knew from Hiller, Aylett and Russell. It was easy for him to follow the survey line west across the Pelion Plains to an old survey campsite, which is now the location of Pelion Hut on the Overland Track. The railway survey continued a little way west and ended at the edge of the Pelion Plains where it had been abandoned.[75] The MCZPMPEC track continued on, but as a true bushman's track - steep and poorly formed. It took Innes a week to find the best route down

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73 "Westward Ho! Mr. Russell's Report", *Launceston Examiner,* December 11, 1896.

74 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 4.

75 Alan Stewart to WH Scott, August 31, 1891, *PWD214/1/145 General Correspondence and Associated Papers Relating to the Construction, Maintenance and Operations of Specific Railway Lines, Mole Creek-Zeehan line*, AOT.

to the Forth River at the foot of Mount Pelion West, 'a rugged old mountain, frowning down on us'.[76] On 5 December 1896, the survey party moved their camp to the Forth River, called Frog Flats now, but Innes called it Lammervale, a name that was not applied to this location before or again.[77] Again he called the country very beautiful.

Despite the apparent difficulties of finding a line up the thickly timbered and steep face of Mount Pelion West it 'did not prove so formidable a customer as he looked'. This allowed Innes to reach Lake Will, another 10 miles onwards, within 11 days, which included three days of rain and snow.[78] On 22 December, William Aylett left the camp to have Christmas at home and carried another of Innes' progress reports. In the two days before the report, Innes and his party had climbed Barn Bluff, to look over the countryside to the west, and the following day, Innes and Russell had walked through to Granite Tor and returned. The quick trip to Granite Tor was needed because the view from Barn Bluff was obscured by smoke from bushfires that were 'in almost every direction'.[79] These may have been Innes' own fires, because he burnt the forests to clear the undergrowth, or they may have been lit by prospectors firing the country to aid their searches.

This progress report contains the themes that Innes returned to regularly, the difficulties or otherwise of the route and the beauty of the countryside. He predicted that 'if this track is a success it will be the favourite tourist route in

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76 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 4.

77 "From the North to the West", *Mercury*, December 12, 1896.

78 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 4.

79 Ibid. 5.

Tasmania, as it cannot be beaten for beauty'.[80] This was one of the few predictions about the Mole Creek Track that came close to being fulfilled. He went on to say that 'the Gordon cannot be compared to it, and it is quite up to Port Davey', and then launched into a long description of the scenery:

> At present the sides of the mountains are ablaze with blossoms of all colours, from pure white to dark red; some of these blossoms have a rich perfume. Innumerable lakes stud the patches of level country, and the sides of the deep ravines are covered with the dark foliage of pines and myrtles.[81]

At Lake Will, Innes allowed his party a day off to celebrate Christmas Day. The next day torrential rain started and continued for three days.[82] Russell and Innes climbed Cradle Mountain and examined the old trigonometric station at its summit. It was about this time that the relationship between Russell and Innes started to break down. There should have been little tension between them as most of the route had been along the general route of the older MCZMPEC track and was well known to Russell, and to Aylett. It had taken two months work to take the survey 40 miles to Lake Will. The remaining 46 miles to Rosebery would take another five and a half months to complete.

By this time, the routine of work was well established. Even within this small group there were a number of distinct jobs. At the front of the survey were Innes and his guide, Russell, finding the route. They climbed mountains to scan the landscape and followed this by exploring on the ground. The views helped Innes, who as an experienced explorer. He was not deceived by the common

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80 "From North-West to West", *Mercury*, December 30, 1896.

81 Ibid.

82 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 5.

misconception that 'hills always appear steeper when viewed from a distance'.[83] In forested country the final route could not be selected until the country had been crossed and recrossed by Innes and his guides pushing through the undergrown to examine all the possible lines. This could take a surprisingly long time. Innes and Russell took almost a week to find a way through the few miles of relatively open forest from the Pelion Plains to the Forth River at the foot of Mount Pelion West.[84] Even when the bush was burnt, it was still a barrier and Innes found that the half burnt scrub tore the clothing off the men's backs.[85] If the forest was damp, then only the leaves burned and left blackened sticks, which Innes found 'nearly as bad as the green scrub to deal with'.[86]

Another deception for an exploring surveyor was that 'country covered with fallen timber, rocks, &c., generally appears more difficult than it really is'.[87] The later track-cutters were intimidated by some rocky sections of Innes' route and deviated from them.

Once Innes and the guides had found the best location for the track, it had to be cleared, 'chained' and marked. Bradshaw and Rowe cleared the line through the forests to make a rough track, but mainly to allow the length of the track to be measured, or 'chained'. They measured the length of the survey line with a

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83 John Coane, Henry Coane, John Coane, Jnr, *Australasian Roads, A Treatise on the Location Design, Construction and Maintenance of Roads, Pavements, etc*, (Melbourne: George Robertson & Co, 1915), 66.

84 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 4.

85 EG Innes to Surveyor General, February 25, 1897, *LSD42*, AOT

86 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 6.

87 Coane, *Australasian Roads*, 66.

surveyors' chain, a metal chain 66 feet long, made up of 100 links.[88] Distances along the track were then given in miles, chains and links. Finally, the survey line was permanently marked and signposted.

Innes had his challenges in the field, but he also had problems back in the towns and cities. Daniel Griffin had turned his attention to the survey and Innes' progress reports. On 12 January 1897, in a long article in the *Mercury* 'From North-West to West', Griffin continued his objections to the Mount Pelion route and began, what was to be, a long campaign against Innes.[89] In his typical colourful style, he criticised the route and Innes' perceived slowness and his views of the scenery. For him, the country west of Granite Tor did not just have a 'brokenness and rugged grandeur', it was a result of nature having a 'fit of convulsions when this portion of Tasey was made'.[90] This created what Griffin called 'Paddy's nightmare' which, he said, Innes looked at with 'the eyes of a professional' while he 'only saw it with the eyes of a layman'.[91]

After sending his letter to the *Mercury*, Griffin set off to climb Cradle Mountain and prospect in the streams nearby. When he returned, he wrote a number of descriptive articles, without a word about Innes' survey.[92] However, he must

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88 The utmost care had to be taken to maintain these chains so they didn't stretch or distort, otherwise the distances would not be accurate.
David Jones, "Surveying in Rough Bush Country", *Surveyor*, Vol.2 No 2, (May 1897), 17 - 23.

89 DD Griffin, "From North-West to West", *Mercury*, January 12, 1897.

90 DD Griffin, "From North West to West", *Mercury*, January 12, 1897.

91 Ibid.
Unfortunately, Griffin's combative style meant that sometimes genuinely useful information was ignored, such as a possible track north past Cradle Mountain. Griffin had described this route in his normal grand eloquent style, and Innes had ridiculed it, but the Overland Track now runs along this narrow shelf on the western side of Cradle Mountain.

92 'The Tramp' (DD Griffin), "In the Cradle Country", *Mercury*, February 8, 1897.

have had Innes in mind when he climbed Cradle Mountain, because he was no more than a few miles from his camp and he would have seen the fires that the survey party had lit. But true to form a week later he returned to the subject of the survey and resumed his attack. Griffin ridiculed Innes' most recent progress report. He thought that Innes' comment that 'mosquitoes and flies are plentiful' would have disappointed supporters of the route. It was 'hardly news' to Griffin 'that there is "heavy country and dense scrub"'.[93] His experience had been that the scrub 'in that direction [was] so dense that we had to cut out room for our dog to bark'.[94] He went on to remind readers that the Mole Creek to Zeehan railway survey had 'stopped short "like grandfather's clock"' at Mount Pelion West, implying that the same fate lay in store for Innes, and anyone else foolish enough to take that route to the West Coast.[95] Moving on to the supporters of the route, Griffin called them 'bar room explorers' and fully expected the survey to fail because 'truly facts are stubborn things', and he knew the facts.[96]

This induced a flurry of other experts, some much less qualified and much less colourful. 'An Old Prospector' said that Innes was surveying a route which already existed as the MCZMPEC track and the Mole Creek and Zeehan Railway survey.[97] He trivialised Innes' reports saying that they contained nothing of use, 'except in the matter of "flies" and "camping spots"'.[98] He saved his best for last when he concluded that 'to waste so much time and money on well known open grass plains stamps the imbecility and rottenness of the Minister's department and

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93 'The Tramp' (DD Griffin), "From North West to West", *Mercury*, February 15, 1897.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 "An Old Prospector', "North West to West", *Mercury,* February 20, 1897.
98 Ibid.

in this case takes the "cake" for blundering and mismanagement'.[99] These letters did not escape Innes. He may have been in the bush for about four months but Aylett carried these articles to him along with the supplies for the survey party.

West of Lake Will, Innes followed the last of the MCZMPEC track over high plains surrounding Mount Inglis, bounded to the north by the Fury River valley, an impenetrable, deep and steep obstruction. The alternative was the thickly wooded valley of the Bluff River to the south. Innes generally followed Russell's route along the old track but later regretted this because it was both high and exposed. He did suggest a deviation along the edge of the valley of the Bluff River, but it was not taken up by the later track-cutters. It may have been summer but the weather broke in late December and 11 days of heavy rain and fogs followed forcing them to be 'literally feeling' their way.[100] However, it was relatively easy going over the plains, which were more a long open ridge, linking Mount Inglis to Granite Tor.

Granite Tor marked the end of open country and the end of Russell's role as guide. Innes thought that he was 'little use' and relegated him to the position of packer.[101] Aylett became guide, and packer, and Innes recruited his brother, Josiah. The western half of the survey had been a problem for Russell during his earlier journey. It was difficult for Innes during this survey, and would be a problem for the track-cutters a few years later. Poised on the southern end of a long spur leading up to the top of Granite Tor there were only a few options and

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99 Ibid.

100 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 5.

101 Ibid. 6.

none of them good. There were no tracks through the broken and thickly forested country. The main geographical feature was almost continuous wall of mountains and hills ringing Granite Tor, from Sophia Peak to the south to the northern tip of Mount Farrell. Innes, and Aylett, wanted to follow a gully south to join the headwaters of Sophia River.[102] Russell had previously taken another route down to the Sophia River and the only other alternative was over the open top of Granite Tor and into the thickly timbered valley of the Brougham River. They worked their way around the southern flanks of Granite Tor through 'densely wooded, broken country', which Innes called the 'worst country upon the whole route', until they reached the headwaters of Granite Creek, a tributary of the Sophia River.[103] Here Innes saw the alluring prospect of a more direct route to Rosebery through the valley of the Murchison River.

Innes held onto the possibility of a direct approach to Rosebery until it was absolutely clear that there was no prospect of penetrating the arc of mountains that blocked his path. He kept this hope alive even after Josiah Innes and William Aylett failed to find the direct path. The reason was that it would shorten the route by about 10 miles. But the only opening in the mountains was a 'tremendous gorge' that the Sophia River cuts to divide Victoria Peak from the Alexandra Hills.[104] In late February, camped at Granite Creek, Innes was beginning to face the prospect of taking the track north to round Mount Farrell, which he called the 'long way around', but still felt that he could find a way through the gorge. But all discussion of this option ended when a closer look at

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102 "From NW to W", *Mercury*, January 18, 1897.

103 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 11.

104 Ibid. 6.

the gorge showed that it was walled by tall cliffs and that the river filled it to the bases of the cliffs.

This decision coincided with the weather turning from 'very bad' to 'much worse'.[105] For ten days the 'surrounding mountains were snow-clad and the rain falling in torrents, all the streams flooded', which meant that the survey party stayed in their tents.[106] He took the track the 'long way around' beside the Alexandra Hills and crossed the Sophia River, near where it joins the Mackintosh, at the northern end of Mount Farrell. The Sophia River could be forded when flowing at its normal level, but Innes had his men fell a tree across the river to be a bridge during floods.[107] Amongst the supplies that Aylett packed to the camp at the Sophia River was the *Mercury* containing another short letter from Griffin. He mainly attacked the DIA, but he didn't miss the chance to ridicule the route saying that 'Mr Innis [sic] is still in the Sophia valley, and judging by his last report, likely to remain there until the Archangels come along'. [108]

The weather in this elevated country could be very hard, as Henry Hellyer's expedition found in 1828. They were caught in bad weather near the Sophia River and were forced to walk over the top of Granite Tor through thick snow and a heavy snow storm. For them the steep and deep Fury Gorge was salvation, as there was 'no alternative, [but to] retreat into the gully or perish, and we made for the horrid ravine as our only refuge'.[109]

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105 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 6.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid. 7.

108 'The Tramp' (DD Griffin), "North-Western Tracks", *Mercury*, March 19, 1897.

109 Henry Hellyer, November 1828, as quoted in Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, 98.

Innes may have decided that Russell was a poor guide, but going north to round Mount Farrell was a route suggested by him. However, Innes put the choice down to the scouting work of his brother Josiah and Aylett. It was during this work that Josiah Innes and Aylett discovered the mineral outcrop at Mount Farrell that would go on to become a successful small mine.[110]

The route was quickly surveyed and marked along the southern side of the Mackintosh River and then through to the Murchison River. Aylett, who had been packing supplies from Mole Creek, returned home and left the survey party to supply themselves from Rosebery, which was now much closer. Before he left, Innes wrote a detailed response to Griffin's criticisms, which Aylett packed out. Before the survey party could cross the normally fordable Murchison River the weather broke again and the river flooded. They were stuck on the eastern bank of the river for twelve days and were put on 'short allowance' to conserve the remaining food.[111]

On 17 April, they crossed the river, chancing their luck with fast flowing water up to their waists. EG Innes, Josiah Innes and Con Russell climbed into the river, each loaded with about 60 pounds of supplies and fought their way across the current for 200 feet.[112] It was the return trip, without a load, that was the most dangerous. Innes thought that another two or three inches of water would have made it impossible to resist the current.[113] They loaded again and carried another

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110 Successful at least for Josiah Innes as Aylett had no share in it, but the two did share two useless mineral leases at Granite Creek.

111 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 7.

112 Ibid. 7, 10.

113 Ibid. 7.

load across, and then returned for the last load, and Bradshaw and Rowe. Just as they had got their camp across the river, there was more heavy rain and they were forced to stay in their tents for another four days. The prolonged exposure, rationed food and bad weather started to take a toll. One man was suffering with severe rheumatism, but he still just able to work. The weather was 'terrible' with more snow, hail, sleet and strong winds, but they were close to the end of the track so 'with a willing party the work kept moving'.[114] Innes himself was 'an invalid' for the final fortnight.[115]

Between Mount Farrell and Rosebery, it is highly likely that Innes followed a prospecting track developed by Tom Farrell, who had been prospecting in this area for some years. Even so, they struck a wall of horizontal near the Pieman River and had to 'literally to cut through almost a solid mass'.[116] But 'the heaviest scrub upon the whole line' did not daunt the group and on 22 May they connected the survey with the track that ran from Rosebery to Ringville, the end of the North-East Dundas Tramway.[117]

Innes was interviewed on 3 May 1897 by the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, when he walked into Rosebery for supplies.[118] He was very positive about the route that he had marked and so was the *Herald*. The paper proffered that Innes' success proved their argument that there should be direct overland communications between the 'mineral centres and the great producing areas of the

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114 Ibid. 8.

115 Ibid. 11.

116 Ibid., 8. Horizontal is a bush endemic to Western Tasmania that grows in almost impenetrable tickets.

117 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 8.

118 "The Overland Route", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 4, 1897

north and north-west of the colony'.[119] Like Launceston's NWDRA, they said that the track was a first step to a railway from Mole Creek to the West Coast.[120]

A few days later the NWDRA met with the DIA in Deloraine, although they weren't aware of Innes' interview with the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald.* The DIA committee now supported the Mole Creek route, because they expected it to become a railway soon, and because it would pass the mines in the at Mount Pelion area, which were owned by Deloraine businessmen. There was no longer any competition with the DIA's preferred route to Queenstown via the Western Tiers because it was already open. 42 cattle were driven out of Deloraine to the West Coast on that day.[121] At the meeting, the speeches about the Mole Creek route, including those by the NWDRA, were cheered. There were some minor objections about the meeting being premature because Innes' report hadn't been received. But despite this, a motion expressing satisfaction with Innes' 'energy and perseverance' was passed.[122] Reports of this meeting flushed out Daniel Griffin who called the route 'imaginary' and complained that he had been slighted in a recent letter to the editor, although, he was not named.[123] The *Launceston Examiner* had tired of his letters and it wasn't printed because it was 'not suitable for our columns'.[124]

Innes' survey party quickly returned to Hobart. Their first night in relative comfort was at Ringville to wait for a tram to Dundas and then the railway to

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119 "Our Alternate Outlets", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 7, 1897.
120 Ibid.
121 "Way to the West, Meeting at Deloraine", *Launceston Examiner,* May 11, 1897.
122 Ibid.
123 DD Griffin, "The Way to the West", *Mercury*, May 25, 1897.
124 "To Correspondents", *Launceston Examiner,* May 22, 1897.

Zeehan. They over-nighted in Zeehan and the following morning took a train from Zeehan to Strahan and left the same day for Hobart on the SS Australia.

On 27 May, the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* reported that Innes' survey of the Mole Creek route was finished.[125] The paper had been told that the route was generally good and that there was some good country, but the convention was that Innes would not comment in detail until he had reported to the Minster of Lands. Vague comments were enough for the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* to want the track made, from both ends at the same time, and to say, naively, that no-one should oppose that.[126]

Innes had expected to take three months, but was out for seven months. The broken country, thick forests and poor weather delayed the survey, and it cost more than expected. He had tried to speed the job up by getting help from his brother and using Aylett as a guide, as well as a packer.[127] The total survey cost of £965 was a significant investment considering the track finally cost £3,000 to construct.[128] Most of the cost was wages to Innes, who then paid Bradshaw, Rowe and Josiah Innes; to Russell and to Aylett. Food was the other significant cost. Tents and tools were provided from the Government store and returned after the survey, if they were still serviceable. Innes sold some of his butter to the great satisfaction of the Tasmanian Diary Company.[129]

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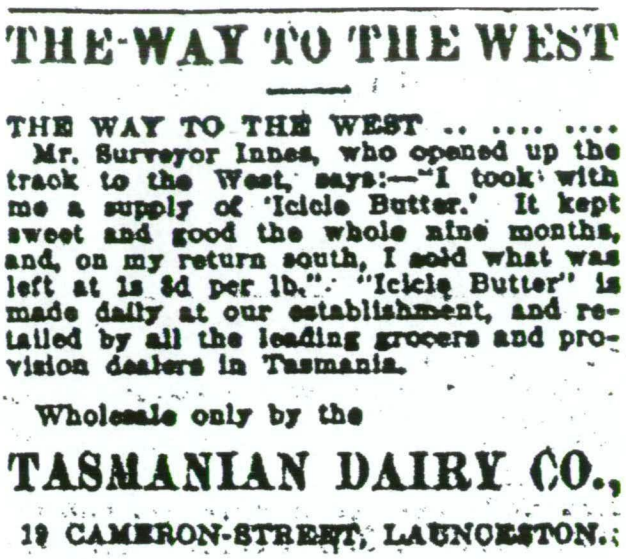
125 "Mole Creek-West Coast Route", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 27, 1897.

126 Ibid.

127 "Current Topics, Westward Ho! Mr EG Innes", *Launceston Examiner*, October 21, 1896. "Launceston Day by Day", *Tasmanian Mail*, October 24, 1896.

128 Innes to Secretary of Works, *PWD18/1/3132,* AOT.
PWD 117 Ledgers of Payments to Contractors under Items in Public Works Execution Acts, 63 Vic 41 item 319, AOT

129 "Dairy Produce", *Launceston Examiner*, April 8, 1899.



THE WAY TO THE WEST

THE WAY TO THE WEST .. ..
Mr. Surveyor Innes, who opened up the track to the West, says:—"I took with me a supply of 'Icicle Butter.' It kept sweet and good the whole nine months, and, on my return south, I sold what was left at 1s 8d per lb." "Icicle Butter" is made daily at our establishment, and retailed by all the leading grocers and provision dealers in Tasmania.

Wholesale only by the

TASMANIAN DAIRY CO.,

19 CAMERON-STREET, LAUNCESTON.

Figure 2-5 – Advertisement for Icicle Butter

The time, manpower and money put into finding the route of the Mole Creek Track shows how important, and difficult, it was to find the best location for a track through a mountainous and forested landscape. This hard work was the practical reality of finding a route for a track in the Tasmanian bush.

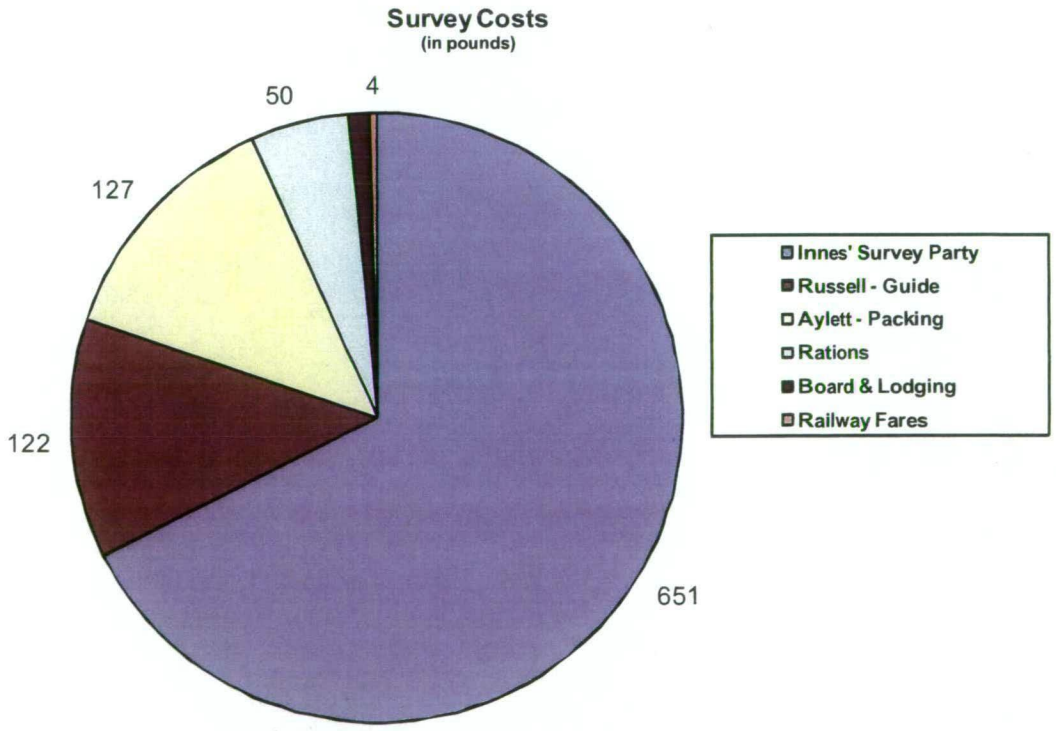


Figure 2-6 Survey Costs (in pounds, £)

The NWDRA was enthusiastic about Innes' survey, but waited patiently for his report. When it was published it brought the simmering dispute between North and South to a sharp boil. Again the editors clashed, but in the end money was set aside for making Innes' route.

Griffin's and Innes' conflict needs to be examined in more detail. It wasn't simply two cantankerous men arguing, but points to other issues and also throws light onto the key elements of track making. Well before Innes' final report was published, in fact before Innes had set out on the survey, Daniel Griffin had decided that the best route to the West Coast from Mole Creek. This was via the Middlesex Plains, and any other option was wrong. Griffin was a formidable force, even though others had the same opinion, few people knew the country as well as Griffin and fewer had his tenacity to pursue an argument. No-one should have been surprised by his response to Innes' report. Griffin's criticisms were a combination of the natural conflict between bushmen's and surveyors' expectations for a track, a desire to see the best route used, a combative nature and a love of a rich writing style.

As we have seen, Griffin did not wait for Innes to complete the survey to expose, what he considered to be, the folly of the route Innes followed and he also took aim at anything else that would ridicule the work. The *Launceston Examiner* had been surprisingly restrained in the face of these criticisms. They published a couple of articles that were mainly flattering descriptions of journeys taken along

the survey line but they did not take on any of the comments printed in the *Mercury*.[130]

It was Innes that answered the critics in a long letter published in the *Launceston Examiner* three months after Griffin's January attack. Innes and his party may have been at the eastern bank of the Murchison River, 74 miles from the start of the track, but even in this remote location Innes responded with a long, and sometimes emotional, answer to his critics. As a dedicated and hardworking professional, he appeared to be stung by the criticism and his reply was a combination of hard logic and a personal attack on Griffin. He took each of Griffin's arguments and refuted them one at a time. The letters to and fro between Griffin and Innes are colourful but, more importantly, they provide contrasting points of view that can be tested by modern field work.

The first point that Innes took on was that a track already existed, the MCZMPEC track, and it was good enough for a horse to reach Lake Will from Gads Hill. His comment was that 'it is a well-known fact that an active pack horse, in good hands, can be got to scramble over a patch of country that is utterly unsuitable for a line of road, or even a decent pack track'.[131] Innes turned to Griffin's description of the old track as a 'well graded and well cleared pack track' with some of his own colourful comments.[132] One section, Innes said, was steep, so much so that getting down was not a problem, implying that it was easy to fall,

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130 JW Cheek, "The Way to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, February 26, 1897. Chapdirr, "The Way to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, April 5, 1897.

131 EG Innes, "Correspondence, Mole Creek to the West, A Practical Route Secured, The Murchison Crossed, Mr Innes Replies to The Tramp", *Launceston Examiner*, April 12, 1897.

132 Ibid.

'but the stop at the bottom' was the difficulty.[133] He also added that this section needed to be cleared of scrub, fallen logs and was dotted with boulders, a description confirmed by modern field work. Innes also pointed out that the old MCZMPEC track at Mount Pelion West was so steep that one of Aylett's pack horses had fallen backwards on it and broken its hip. When he moved to Griffin's comments about the track further west, Innes drew on Forest King, a horse of Griffin's that died near Barn Bluff during a snow storm. Innes quipped that its ghost may have been 'troubling Mr. G. and his henchmen', and reported a rumour that Griffin had 'lost his bearings, becoming completely bothered' in the area.[134] But it was with exasperation that Innes asked why Griffin should object to his 'going into rhapsodies over the flowers and natural beauties of the country'.[135] He claimed 28 years of bush-work, and a visit to New Zealand, as qualifications to 'fairly claim the right to have a say in the matter, even to the extent of differing with Mr. Griffin'.[136] He turned the attack onto Griffin and his remark that Lake Lea was the Killarney of Tasmania, Innes called it 'a duck pond' and that Griffin had only praised because it was on his preferred northern route via the Middlesex Plains.[137]

Innes' letter was long, detailed, colourful and largely accurate, but he made two small mistakes. The first was his attack on the claim that Griffin had taken a horse past Cradle Mountain, which despite some liberties by Griffin, was a viable route, and is now part of the Overland Track. But it does illustrate Griffin's

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133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.

intimate knowledge of this country since this one narrow pathway was difficult to locate. Innes' second mistake was when he finished by telling Griffin to stick to his trade and that Griffin was not an authority on laying out roads 'if the road leading from Liena to Gad's Hill, which bears his name, is a specimen'.[138] This road was actually surveyed by Graham but Innes had consistently called it Griffins Road.[139] The rebuttal was unlikely to silence Griffin, or even cower him.

Griffin read Innes' response and replied the next day.[140] His easiest target was Innes' trivial mistake about the name of Grahams Road, which he refuted in great detail. While he began his letter with 'Fair play is bonny play', he didn't honour that commitment.[141] Griffin accused Innes of an 'utter disregard of facts' and that 'this knight of the theodolite' was giving the Government a much worse bargain than most people thought.[142] Oddly, Griffin appeared to be hurt by Innes' comments, even though they were very much in the same tenor as his original attack.[143] He turned Innes' demand that he 'stick to his trade' back on him by quipping that Innes was not good at 'ink-slinging' and that 'witty people, like poets, are born not made'.[144]

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138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Innes' reply to Griffin did have some effect. Firstly, Innes became the personification of the route from Mole Creek and as such the object of Griffin's attention for many years. The other effect was for Griffin's arguments which had been based on the pretext of local knowledge, to become almost completely emotional.

141 DD Griffin, "Correspondence, Mole Creek to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, April 15, 1897.

142 Ibid.

143 Griffin accused him of lying and that until he 'acknowledges and apologises for his errors' Griffin would not take any further notice of him. Griffin himself was not known for apologising for any of his wild and provocative comments.

144 DD Griffin, "Correspondence, Mole Creek to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, April 15, 1897.

Griffin's frequent and combative letters to the editors relied, to some degree, on real knowledge of the country. But there were many other people who did not know the area. This did not stop fanciful reports of other routes, such as one from the Tyndall Ranges to Granite Tor described as 'fairly level and open for nearly the whole distance', which in fact is through rugged and thickly wooded country.[145] It was easy to make unchecked speculation because so few people knew the country. The area was mapped but the position of many mountains and rivers was uncertain. The detail of Griffin's further letters to the *Mercury*, although colourful, provide little further relevant information. For example his next letter concerned itself with Innes' over-familiarity with Griffin (calling him old Dan), the cost of the survey, and his credentials to judge the beauty of the countryside.[146] Innes did not respond to Griffin's taunts again. From the end of May, when the survey finished, until the start of August, when the report was published after Innes had recovered from illness, there was little discussion about tracks from Mole Creek.[147]

Innes' Report

On 3 August, Alfred Pillinger tabled Innes' report in the House of Assembly and with this the whole debate about the route was reinvigorated but it did not provide

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145 "Mole Creek to West Coast, Some Important Information", *Launceston Examiner*, March 9, 1897.

146 DD Griffin, "From North-West to West", *Mercury*, April 20, 1897.

147 "House of Assembly", *Launceston Examiner*, July 15, 1897;
"West Coast Communication", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, July 19, 1897.
One insightful comment in that time, which related to railways but was equally true for tracks, was that the Northern and Southern interest in direct links were ignoring the desires of the West Coast. What they wanted, according to the editor of the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, was a direct link with a port and connection to the Tasmanian railway system.

any additional insights other than into the conflicts of vested interests.[148] Both the *Launceston Examiner* and the *Mercury* printed almost all of the long report. Prichard at the *Launceston Examiner* announced he had read it 'with satisfaction', stated that it crushed the opposition to the route, took a swipe at the Linda Track, expanded on the advantages of the Mole Creek route and expected that a proposal to build the track would be made in a few days. In Launceston, Innes received a 'hearty welcome' when he presented his report to the NWDRA and, although he felt that his report spoke for him, he answered questions from the association's members. He recommended a suspension bridge across the Murchison River and expected the track to cost £2,000 to £3,000 to cut out, costing about £8 per mile to clear and £28 per mile to form. Innes closed his account by commenting that 'when he started on the track he intended to go through and he stuck to his task. He thought he could say that he had done his duty as far as possible'. This was met with loud cheers.[149] The initial response by HR Nicholls at the *Mercury* was mildly negative, calling the report 'rather a disappointment' for its supporters because it proved, he said, that the route could not be opened as a railway but conceded that it may be useful as a horse track.[150]

It would not be long, however, before a more concerted attack began. Initially, the *Mercury* responded light-heartedly to Innes' speculation about the future collapse of Barn Bluff by asking whether the route to Rosebery finished at the pub.[151] More significant, however, was a letter from Henry Chalmers, the

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148 Journal of Votes and Proceedings of House of Assembly, August 3, 1897.

149 "Mole Creek Track to Rosebery, Westward Ho with Mr Innes, A Good Coach Road", *Launceston Examiner*, August 6, 1897.

150 Editorial *Mercury*, August 5, 1897.

151 'Cousin Jack', "The Humours of a Track", *Mercury*, August 9, 1897.

disposed and disgruntled district surveyor. Aside from some personal attacks, he suggested two short-cuts totalling about 15 miles, one to the top of Gad's Hill and the other across the Forth River valley. He concluded with three points: the route that Innes marked was already known as the MCZMPEC track, that Innes' 'voluminous report is utterly worthless' and that the time taken and the cost had been unnecessarily long. The same criticisms could all have been levelled at Chalmers' earlier work on a track on the old VDL route, except that he didn't write a report or finish the job.[152] Prichard responded and this began a tit-for-tat game with the major Southern and Northern newspapers lining up people to support their respective positions. For the *Mercury* the main protagonists against the route were Griffin and Chalmers, located in the North, and for the *Launceston Examiner* the most eloquent supporter of the route was Innes, supported by Aylett, Parsons and some others. Both editors blustered at slights from each other. The *Tasmanian Mail*, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* all took sides.

Another Griffin letter appeared in the *Mercury* on 16 August and this marked the end of any factual discussion and the start of a long-winded and bitter attack on Innes' competence for any task, surveying, prospecting, farming, timber milling and naming of lakes.[153] Innes wrote one last letter to rebut Chalmers' claims, even though the Minister for Lands and Works warned him not to take too much responsibility for the route. The letter was very long, detailed, accurate and full of restrained anger. It filled a large part of one page of the *Launceston Examiner* and systematically demolished Chalmers' ill-informed comments under headings

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152 HJ Chalmers, "Mr Innes' Report", *Mercury*, August 9, 1897.

153 "Mr Surveyor Innes' Report", *Mercury*, August 16, 1897.

of: 'What Mr Chalmers Doesn't Know'; "Will's Track'; 'Following the Railway Line'; 'Who Should Know Best?'; 'A Rash Assertion'; 'Exit Chalmers'; 'The Question of Grades'; 'Timber'; 'Land'; 'The Snow Bogey'; 'The Fox and the Grapes'; and 'Conclusion'.[154]

Towards the end of August, the intensity of the arguments began to subside, although Daniel Griffin did try to inject fresh energy into the conflict by claiming that prospectors at Mount Pelion had been forced out by snow and the difficulties with packing supplies.[155] The *Launceston Examiner* responded quickly by interviewing the prospectors and getting ringing endorsements for Innes' route and a denial of any problems.[156] There was a small flurry of claim and counter-claim about the veracity of each other's position, but by early September the bigger battle over railways to the West Coast had pushed the Mole Creek Track from the newspapers. Griffin's enthusiasm for the argument may also have been reduced after the *Launceston Examiner* told its readers that they would not publish his letters because they did not consider his statements accurate.[157] Another humiliation came a few days later when a poem was published in the *Launceston Examiner* which gave him 'a rough keel-hauling'. Titled 'Daniel Dusted' it began:

> Oh, wrecker Dan,
> You're not the man,
> To smash the Mole Creek track up.

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154 EG Innes, "Correspondence, Mole Creek to Mount Black, Mr Innes in Reply to Mr Chalmers", *Launceston Examiner,* August 18, 1897.

155 "The Innes Track", *Mercury,* August 23, 1897.
"The Innes Track" *Mercury,* August 25, 1897.
DD Griffin, "The Mole Creek Track", *Mercury,* September 4, 1897.

156 "Westward Ho, Mole Creek to the Silver Fields, A Misleading Telegram", *Launceston Examiner,* August 26, 1897.

157 "Westward Ho, Southern Movement, Deputation to Ministers", *Launceston Examiner,* September 2, 1897.

and continued by listing his 'bunkum' about the 'starved out' and 'snowed up'.[158] Naturally, Griffin maintained his series of angry letters but they gained little traction. In October 1897 he celebrated the first anniversary of Innes setting out from Launceston by continuing his attack on Innes and his support for the route via the Middlesex Plains.[159] At his best Griffin provided some scrutiny of the officious surveyor, but he lost his credibility with fanciful language and personal attacks.

The Art of Laying Out

Innes' work on the Mole Creek Track rewards deeper interrogation because it gives great detail on how he 'laid out' the Mole Creek Track. It also gives a window to this forgotten art which was applied to many Tasmania tracks. In fact, Innes' work is a perfect example because he was fastidious in how he carried it out and his work was very well documented by him and the newspapers of the day.

In nineteenth century Tasmania, the term 'laying out' was widely known and understood, although there was no concise definition. 'Laying out', also called marking or surveying, seems to mean finding, what was called at the time, a 'practical' route through a complicated landscape of mountains, forests, rivers and valleys. It was a separate and important step for all substantial tracks and it was done by experienced men like Innes. The art of laying out was widely understood, in the abstract, and widely disputed in practice because of individual

158 'Argus', "Shreds and Patches", *Launceston Examiner*, September 4, 1897.
159 "Deloraine", *Tasmanian Mail*, October 16, 1897.

differences over what constituted a 'practical' route. A track put in the wrong place, no matter how well formed, was expensive to make and unpleasant to use. An example of a poorly 'laid out' track is the Barn Bluff Track between the Forth River and mines at Lake McRae near Barn Bluff. In this case, the fundamental problem was that the route was marked by a local bushman rather than an experienced surveyor. There was strong support for this track, both as access to mines in the Barn Bluff area and as a long lauded way of crossing the Forth River valley. It was made at considerable cost.[160] However, it rose steeply up a narrow ridge at steep grades, between 1 in 5 and 1 in 3. It was rarely used and subsequently abandoned.[161]

Innes' survey placed the track in the landscape and largely determined the gentle grades that the Mole Creek Track exhibits.[162] Innes was told to make the grade

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160 *PWD 117 Ledgers of Payments to Contractors under Items in Public Works Execution Acts, 63 Vic 41 item 319*, AOT.

161 G Waller, Report on the Mineral Districts of Bell Mount, Dove River, Five- Mine Rise, Mount Pelion, and Barn Bluff, Secretary for Mines Report No. 4, *JPPP* (1901). Alexander McIntosh Reid, The Mount Pelion Mineral District, *Geological Survey Bulletin No. 30,* 1919, 8.

162 It is worthwhile to convey the experience of travelling along this kind of track, because it does have a characteristic style and explains the outcomes of a good survey. Once explained the definitive feeling of a good track is obvious but for the most bushwalkers and tourists who experience Tasmania's iconic tracks it is not consciously appreciated. One barrier to understanding is that many bushwalking tracks such as; the Overland Track, the South-West Track and Frenchman's Cap Track; were established by people who did not understand the subtleties of making a good track or, if they did, did not have the resources to make one. This is a failing that links pioneering bushwalkers and the pioneering bushmen before them. For users of these tracks today, the norm is a poor track and the hardships that they create are taken as part of the overall challenge of bushwalking. It seems that only professionals, the surveyors in the nineteenth century and Parks and Wildlife Service staff today, understand the technical subtleties of what makes a track 'practical'.

The experience of walking along a good pack track is a gentle journey, possibly not easy but never hard. When a good track encounters an obstacle, a mountain or valley, it crosses it at an angle, to reduce the inclination of the track and to maintain a consistent and gentle grade. It curves around spurs and ridges to surmount barriers that would have appeared to be a difficult challenge. The walker's pace is consistent and the well formed and wide track lets them place their feet unconsciously at every step. The result is that the journey takes on a gentle rhythm and allows the walker to take in the surroundings and to contemplate their natural beauty. The gentle grades were welcomed by walkers but they existed for the pack-

'not more than 1 in 10, and only for a short distance' which is consistent with the acceptable grades for horse tracks.[163] He would have already been aware of what comprised an acceptable grade and he took this limit seriously, as was shown by his frequent reference to grade in his report. Indeed he was lampooned by one detractor for the number of times that he had mentioned it.[164] It was also something that he defended strongly in his reply to Chalmers' criticisms. He called a section of his response 'The Question of Grades' and stated that the steepest grade was 1 in 11 'for a few chains' and the remainder was less than 1 in 13. For a comparison he cited the grades of Hobart streets, such as parts of Murray Street with a grade of 1 in 10 and Liverpool Street was 1 in 16.[165] Even so he did not convince Daniel Griffin who claimed that Innes' route would only be used 'by badgers, native cats, and other animals of the long claw tribe'.[166]

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horses that the track was designed for. The only published information on pack tracks, from New Zealand, explains that horses are 'proud and temperamental animals' which are 'prone to lose control when they panic'.

Since pack-horses were roped together as a team and required to work together, a good track would not stress the horses but allow them to plod at a steady pace. This generates one of the distinctive features of pack tracks in that 'they meander in and out of the side gullies while maintaining the steady grade' Many modern bushwalkers and tourists know the Overland Track, and it contrasts bad track placement with good. The good is at Mount Pelion West, where the Overland Track adopts the much eroded Mole Creek Track at Pine Forest Moor. Sheltered in the forest, the track winds around the spurs of this formable mountain at a gentle grade to reach the Frog Flats where it crosses the Forth River and then rises to the Pelion Plains. On the other hand of the many examples on the Overland Track of poor track placement, possibly the worst is in the first few miles where it climbs from Crater Lake to Marion's Lookout at a grade of 1 in 3. The climb at the end of this section is short, steep and debilitating, where each foot-fall must be considered carefully to avoid slips and falls, and each step requires the walker push to the limit of their physical capacity to lift themselves, and their pack up, ready for the next step. Other unworthy mentions would apply to the decent to Waterfall Valley and another to Lake Windermere which are both at 1 in 5.

PJ Mahoney, Graded Pack Tracks: an Unappreciated Historic Resource, *Australian Historical Archaeology*, 9, (1991): 76 – 78

163 Secretary for Public Works to EG Innes, October 16 1896, *PWD 2/124/145*, AOT. Coane, *Australasian Roads*, 494.

164 'Quilp', "The Innes Track Humbug", *Mercury*, August 10, 1898.

165 EG Innes, "Correspondence, Mole Creek Track to Mount Black", *Launceston Examiner*, August 18, 1897.

166 "The Innes Route", *Mercury*, March 16, 1898.

Innes used a number of strategies to control grade. The best was to use level country whenever it was available and high alpine moors had the added benefit of being clear of forests and scrub. Following the valleys of rivers and creeks offered naturally gentle grades, such as Wurragarra Creek, a small creek near Lake Curran, the edge of Bluff River to Lake Will, the valley of Brougham River from Granite Tor to Mount Swallow and the valleys of the Mackintosh and Pieman Rivers. The last resort to control grade was where steep country could not be avoided and this was to reduce the gradient by cutting the track as sideling, which meant making the route at an angle to the slope. This produced easier grades but made the track longer. Although avoided, sidling cutting was used along most of the route because it was such mountainous country. The most obvious examples of sidling are the Arm River Track between Wurragarra Creek and Pelion Plains and the Overland Track through the Forth River Gorge.

Grade was only part of track making, but it was a very important part. It, and some other considerations, could be grouped under a broad category of 'ease of use', although this term was not used in the literature of the time. By 'ease of use' I mean the things that would impact directly on a walker's comfort when following the track and include making the route as short as possible, avoiding exposure on high open plains and being clearly marked. In contrast, there was another broad category of factors that were not seen by the users of the track but rather by the people who made it, and these could be called 'ease of construction', which again was not an expression used at the time. This means being able to construct the track as quickly and effectively as possible to control costs. The track would be easier to make if it was as short as possible, avoided thick forest,

avoided steep terrain, by-passed marshy or rocky ground and rivers. Some considerations conflicted and a well made track balanced these factors.

The shortest possible route was the one factor that made the track easier to construct and easier to use. This was a fundamental of 'laying out'. The most obvious example was at Granite Creek where Innes persistently, and vainly, tried to find a direct route to Mount Black which he said would save 10 miles. He was not successful and so he took, what he called the 'long way around'.[167] Henry Chalmers criticised the length of the survey route and suggested a short-cut that could save 15 miles.[168] Innes sarcastically called it a 'wonderful short cut' which crossed the 'enormous gorge' of the Forth River valley and he abandoned the idea. Despite such cynicism, part of Chalmers' short-cut was adopted in 1901 as the Barn Bluff Track to mines at Lake McRae. Innes was proved right because it was criticised for its extremely steep grades and abandoned within ten years.[169]

While Innes used a number of strategies to ensure that the track had a practical grade, he avoided excessively steep terrain, such as near the Forth Gorge. He took the survey to the headwaters where the Forth River was little more than a stream, although that did mean having to climb past Mount Pelion West. He also avoided steep country at the February Plains, where he found 'broken country' on the old MCZMPEC track.

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167 "From North West to West, Some Difficult Country", *Mercury*, March 8, 1897.
168 Norman Cameron, "Letter to the Editor", *Launceston Examiner*, August 12, 1897.
169 EG Innes, "Correspondence", *Launceston Examiner*, August 18, 1897.

Reducing the exposure of walkers to bad weather was another of the important factors which could be called ease of use. The weather that Innes' survey party experienced was fairly typical of the highlands, generally bleak in winter and always the possibility of bad weather, including snow, in summer. Prolonged exposure to the full force of the highland's weather was unpleasant, and potentially fatal, but frequent snow was an absolute bar to a track. In the on-going argument about the Innes route this was called 'The Snow Bogey'.[170] Any track through elevated country had to be generally free of snow to be 'good all-the-year-round'.[171] The elevation of a route was a measure of its propensity for snow. Henry Chalmers stated that the survey was higher than 3,000 foot 'for many miles' and that one section climbed from '3,249 ft to 3,859 ft, nearly the height of Mount Wellington'.[172] He also said that snow stayed on the ground for 'months together'.[173] Innes said there were 'no signs of heavy falls of snow' and some claimed that snow was rarely seen along the route, but others supported Chalmers' assertions.

Innes avoided elevated country where he could, such as his unsuccessful attempt to avoid the February Plains. Another attempt was near Mount Inglis where he wanted to stay off the high exposed plains but was persuaded by Russell to use them. He later suggested a deviation that was about 500 foot lower, which was in the protection of the forested side of the valley below the plains, but this was not taken up. This deviation would have been better for walkers, but would have

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170 Innes, "Correspondence", *Launceston Examiner*, August 18, 1897.

171 "Mole Creek to Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner*, August 6, 1897.

172 General News, *Tasmanian Mail*, August 14, 1897.

173 "Mole Creek to Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner*, August 6, 1897. Editorial, *Mercury*, August 10, 1897.

required more work for clearing and benching, which demonstrates the balance required between competing factors in the 'laying out' of a track.

Avoiding clearing was another consideration in finding a track and this would make the track easier to construct. Thick forests meant the hard work of clearing the undergrowth, felling trees and burning the cleared material. Another disadvantage of a track through thick forest was that it was prone to being blocked by wind-fallen trees. This was a significant problem on any track and was encountered often after the Mole Creek Track had been made. Innes' dislike for thick forest and scrub was summarised by his reference to some vegetation as 'rubbish'. When the track came to be made the overseers had the same attitude to thick forest and made some deviations from Innes' route with the express aim of avoiding it, such as at Mount Inglis. Open plains had some strong advantages for a track but they also had some significant disadvantages like they were often marshy and unsuited for a durable track.

Soft ground was often encountered. In some places, it was simply a matter of removing a soft layer of peat to get a solid base but places like Lake Ayr were 'a bog hole' where pack horses 'would sink to their bellies if they were not very carefully handled'.[174] Boggy ground was avoided when ever practical.

Rock was encountered along the route and some later deviations were made to avoid it, such as between Oakleigh Divide and the Pelion Plains along what is currently the Arm River Track. The overseers changed the route to 'avoid nearly

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[174] Innes, "Correspondence", *Launceston Examiner*, April 12, 1897.

all the rough stony sidling and make a first rate track'.[175] At the western end a deviation was made to avoid three miles of rocky ground near the Pieman River. Where rock could not be avoided it created problems, such as at Mount Pelion West. In some places Innes thought that Russell's route would need a 'shipload of dynamite' to blast out a serviceable route.[176] The term that best summarised the perfect track making land was 'good ground', which was neither too soft nor too hard.

The dilemma for Innes in finding the best place for a track and balancing all the different, and often competing, factors that made a 'practical' track are demonstrated at the February Plains. He called them 'the top of a mountain, open in places and broken up by water courses, bog holes and exposed to the four winds of heaven'.[177] However, he took the track across them because the advantages, open country and relatively flat, were too attractive. This was where the balance of competing factors can be demonstrated in the perfect positioning of the route. The February Plains are not flat but have a series of small lightly timbered hills interspersed with small creeks in broad boggy gullies. Innes took the route along the eastern flanks of these small hills where there is a narrow band of good ground in the transition from the bogs to forest. The good ground was slightly elevated from the boggy plains so that it was well drained and solid ground, but it was not so high as to be in the timber. Taking the route just below, and on the eastern side, of the timber meant that walkers were protected from the bad weather which predominately blows from the west.

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175 Simmons to Packer, March 15, 1898, PWD *18/1/3430*, AOT.

176 Innes to Surveyor General, February 25, 1897, *LSD42*, AOT

177 Innes, "Correspondence", *Launceston Examiner*, August 18, 1897.

Innes' subtle positioning of the track is further demonstrated by how he effectively avoided crossing rivers, and consequently the high cost of building bridges. Within the whole of the survey line, 86 miles, there were only two bridges, over the Sophia and Murchison Rivers. The other rivers the Arm, Forth, Canning, Bluff, Mackintosh and Brougham, and the major creeks Wurragarra, Douglas and Oakleigh were all crossed by natural fords or simple wooden culverts.

The final task was marking the track. Innes and his men had left a line cut through the forests and clearly marked on the open plains. Innes described the track as being easy to carry 'an ordinary swag' along.[178] Prichard was less impressed by the route cleared up Mount Pelion West. He said that the timber being 'knocked down' to allow the route to be surveyed and 'sharp sticks were standing and the trees felled left and right'. He found it more difficult to walk along the survey than the rough old MCZMPEC track.[179] William Aylett was able to take his pack horses as far as Granite Tor. But beyond the route was only good enough to 'pack provisions, bedding or tents on your back'.[180] Two years later the track-makers also found this section very difficult.[181]

The survey line was rough, but it was very well marked, and it needed to be, because regrowth quickly claims many Tasmanian tracks. In forests the trees within 'easy reach' of the survey line were 'marked on either side with a large

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178 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 9.

179 Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.3" *Launceston Examiner*, March 24, 1898.

180 Report of the Select Committee on the Great Midland and West Coast Railway Company Bill' No. 75, *JPPP*, 1898, 2

181 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery', *Launceston Examiner*, February 22, 1899.

blaze or horseshoe mark' and the logs left on the ground across the route were marked with a large notch.[182] On the open plains, the 'route is indicated by stout stakes' which in general were more than four inches thick and between five and six feet high.[183] They were 'firmly planted' in the ground at distances of about 330 feet where the route ran straight and more frequently where it turned.[184] Innes reported using stones to form cairns in a few places to mark the route 'where stakes were not easily available' but none have been located.[185] The distance along the track was shown by 'a short stout peg' every 660 feet with the 'distance in miles and chains marked upon it'.[186] Mile posts were about 3 feet high with the distance marked on them. Even the places where creeks were forded were 'well and plainly marked' by directional signs with directions, called finger posts, nailed to a tree.[187] The legacies of Innes' survey were a thoroughly marked route and an equally thorough report which were indicative of the work of a professional surveyor.

The history of the Mole Creek Track has been dominated by EG Innes. His report has been read in isolation by generations of historians and historically inclined bushwalkers. It is a fulsome document but it as one man's narrative. Taken out of context it generates a distorted view of the making of the track. A more nuanced history comes to life when other archival material and field work is brought into play. Griffin does give another perspective, which, once the emotional and hyperbolic language is removed, is useful in interpreting Innes'

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182 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 9.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.

report and actions. Griffin gives us the voice of a bushman, and they were seldom heard.

And while the Mole Creek Track was a sop to interests in Northern Tasmania, it pales into insignificance in the context of the tracks and surveys from Hobart. But there were no voices like Griffin, local bushmen who knew the reality of the country, to cry fowl of these excesses.

The 'art of laying out' has not been examined before. And while it may be an interesting addendum to the history of this track, it does, nevertheless, add depth to the understanding of bush exploration and packs tracks in Tasmania generally.

Innes reported that he had marked a good line for a track. His professional opinion suited the Northern interests and they wholeheartedly supported his route. His report didn't support the South and they condemned it. Facts were all relative in this parochial argument. Hypocrisy was just as evident and would be displayed again and again in the battle of the tracks and the "railway wars".

The Mole Creek Track had to win the Parliamentary battle to gain funding (even if southern tracks sometimes circumvented this barrier). The Minister for Lands was not impartial in this battle and his duplicity was obvious to the general population, at least those in the North who were looking for it. The track was planned as a pack track and they were much more substantial than bush tracks. Well planned and well executed these substantial tracks were closer to an unsealed road than to the rough routes blazed by bushmen, prospectors and explorers. This was understood at the time, but has been long forgotten.

Arguments about the route from Mole Creek continued after Innes' final report was published in August 1897, but this didn't deter the North and West Direct Route Association (NWDRA).[1] Three days after the report was released, the NWDRA met, and decided that the Government should spend £5,000 to turn the survey into a track.[2] Prichard's editorial in the *Launceston Examiner* praised the route and damned the existing southern track to the West, the Linda track, because it crossed '30 miles of bleak elevated country' and was in places steeper

1 "Launceston", *Mercury* (Hobart), August 5, 1897.

2 "Mole Creek to Rosebery, Westward Ho with Mr Innes, A Good Coach Road", *Launceston Examiner*, August 6, 1897.

than Innes' survey.[3] He argued that making the Mole Creek Track would be money well spent, because it would cost less than half the money spent on the Linda Track (£10,000), and be more useful to 'the people of the West Coast'.[4]

A deputation from the NWDRA took its case directly to the Premier of Tasmania, Sir Edward Braddon on 29 September 1897.[5] Despite the bitter arguments between the North and the South, he gave them a good hearing.[6] It was Alfred Pillinger, the Minster of Lands and Works, who refused to support the track, because, he said, a railway would soon cross the same country.[7]

In response the NWDRA met with some northern Members of Parliament with a plan to convince Pillinger to change his mind.[8] However, there was no mention of the Mole Creek Track when Pillinger read out the proposed Public Works for 1898 on 4 November.[9] Given the argument over this route, it was natural that the *Mercury* and *Launceston Examiner* noticed its absence. Their reactions were

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.
Finance Papers, 1886 – 1900, *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)*.

5 "Mole Creek – Rosebery Track, Deputation to the Premier", *Launceston Examiner*, September 30, 1897.

6 Ibid.

7 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, November 9, 1897.
Alfred Pillinger was the Minister for Lands and Works, responsible for the PWD, with the internal workings of the department under the control of his secretary, HE Packer. Pillinger, as a Member of Parliament, was the public face of the PWD and he received many letters and deputations agitating for tracks, railways and buildings across Tasmania. Public works were funded by annual votes in Parliament for specific items but these also included general funds which Pillinger allocated at his discretion. He had paid for the survey by Innes and part of the construction of the Tyenna-Gordon Track from these general votes. Pillinger had been a member of the House of Assembly since 1876, had been the Minister for Lands and Works for eight years and was well respected. He died suddenly on 6 May 1899, just after the Mole Creek Track had been completed.

8 "Mole Creek-Rosebery Track, Ministerial Indifference, An Important Conference, Action Decided On", *Launceston Examiner*, October 26, 1897.

9 Pillinger, "Ministerial Statement", *Mercury*, November 5, 1897.

predictable. HR Nicholls, the editor of *The Mercury,* gloated about 'that famous piece of work of Mr. Surveyor Innes' and he predicted that 'Launceston [would] growl, no doubt, but we are afraid that the track is one which cannot well be defended'.[10] Prichard at the *Launceston Examiner* didn't just growl, he saw inequity in funding the Tyenna-Gordon Track that would 'not, for a decade to come, be traversed by anyone but a few tourists'.[11] He complained about other work as well and he said that, in general, there was too little money for everyone.

According to Prichard, Pillinger was not 'amenable to reason' and didn't recognise 'the vast importance' of the Mole Creek Track.[12] What was worse for Prichard was that Pillinger had funded a new southern track when 'there was already one good track from Hobart to Mt Lyell'.[13] He called on locals to stir themselves because 'it was no use waiting for the Government to do justice to this end of the island', and he said that pressure had been put on the northern Members of Parliament. He also called for public meetings.[14] The *Launceston Examiner's* Chudleigh correspondent added to the calls with an article 'Mole Creek Route, Mineral Lands, Government Neglect'.[15]

Less than a week later the pressure bore results when Alexander Fowler, MHA for Launceston, was able to report that the track would be added to the proposed

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10 Editorial, *Mercury*, November 5, 1897.

11 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, November 5, 1897.

12 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, November 9, 1897.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 "Mole Creek Route, Mineral Lands, Government Neglect", *Launceston Examiner*, November 11, 1897.

Public Works.[16] EG Innes estimated a cost of £3,320.[17] Finally Pillinger stood again in Parliament on 3 December to address the Public Works expenditures, and there was a new item; 'Track, Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge, £3,000'.[18] The legislation was approved that day despite a lengthy debate in the House of Assembly where North-South arguments were repeated.[19] Just over a week later, the Legislative Council gave final approval. Even though Pillinger's argument, that the track would be unnecessary if any of the proposed railways were built, was aired again .[20]

The NWDRA, perhaps unrealistically, expected the Public Works Department (PWD) to start work immediately, but they were to be disappointed.[21] They were jealous about work starting on the new route from the South to the West, the Tyenna-Gordon Track.[22] In their eyes, this work was premature because, unlike the diligent Northerners, there was no successful survey of its route. The Southern interests had applied pressure, and Pillinger's ill-considered compliance, resulted in work gangs starting from both ends of that track to complete it as quickly as possible. This was the urgency that the South felt that it deserved. A

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16 "Launceston", *Mercury*, November 11, 1897.

17 Innes to Packer, November 15, 1897, *PWD175 Register of Correspondence*, Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT);
Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, November 12, 1897.
This didn't stop Prichard hammered Pillinger, again, the next day in a long and emotional editorial about the 'haphazard manner' of Public Works especially 'in the matter of tracks'. He accused Pillinger of giving in to 'deputation after deputation' from the South who wanted survey parties sent 'to look for fresh routes' where the country was already known and then 'throwing away more public money' in making useless tracks.

18 Journals of the House of Assembly, December 3, 1897, 224.
"Parliament", *Launceston Examiner*, December 4, 1897.
"Parliament of Tasmania", *Mercury*, December 4, 1897.

19 Ibid.

20 "Parliament of Tasmania" *Mercury*, December 11, 1897.

21 "North and West Direct Route Association, Direct to Mount Lyell", *Launceston Examiner*, December 24, 1897.

22 Ibid.

more fundamental problem was that the North was right; it would be a complete failure for the very reasons they gave.

The NWDRA wanted the Mole Creek Track built and immediately, but their eyes were wandering to a new prize, because a rich new mine at Mount Lyell was eclipsing the Zeehan and Rosebery mineral fields. They decided to 'use their upmost endeavours to get the routes to both Rosebery and Mount Lyell opened up without delay'.[23] This was their intention but not Pillinger's. He still found ways to obstruct the start of work. The *Launceston Examiner* put this down to 'influences at work which are antagonistic to the welfare of this part of the island'.[24] However, 1897 ended with a promise from Pillinger that work would start immediately after the Christmas holidays.[25]

The problem was that Pillinger hadn't yet told his officials to start work and it took letters from Norman Cameron, MHA and the NWDRA to spur him to issue his instructions on 14 January 1898.[26] George Simmons, the Inspector of Roads-North, and Fred Read, Sub-Inspector-West Coast, who both had to coordinate the work, now had their directions, but they, their overseers and work gangs were fully committed to other jobs.[27] Read did have time to inspect the western end of

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23 Ibid.

24 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, December 27, 1897.

25 Minister of Lands and Works to William Hartnell, December 30, 1897, *PWD 2 Letterbooks of general outwards correspondence*, AOT.

26 Alex Webster to Minister of Lands, January 11, 1898, *PWD 18/1/3430, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 61 Vic 17 Item 3756 – Track: Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge,* AOT.
Packer to Norman Cameron, January 14, 1898, *PWD 2,* AOT.
Pillinger to Simmons, North, January 14, 1898, *PWD 2*, AOT.

27 George Simmons, as Chief Inspector or Roads – North, was responsible for all PWD roads and track construction in Northern Tasmania and worked out of an office in Latrobe. Simmons' territory, Northern Tasmania, was all the country north of Campbell Town and the Pieman

the route and to decide on the type of bridge that would be used to span the Murchison River.[28]

Ten days later the orderly start to work was abandoned and the track began in a panic. From the start, Pillinger had been reluctant to build the track and his continued delaying tactics had become too much for the Northerners. The *Launceston Examiner* published another editorial, which Chief Inspector Simmons described as 'very indignant'. The secretary for the NWDRA, Alex Webster, wrote to Pillinger stating that 'there are influences at work which will delay the work as much as possible', a veiled reference to Pillinger himself.[29] Pillinger's resistance now collapsed and he over-reacted to save face. He told Simmons to 'leave all other work' to start the Mole Creek Track and summonsed

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River and included the Bass Straight islands. In 1896, the West Coast was added to his territory. As well as road works, he also supervised the construction of many buildings, jetties and bridges. He recommended work, administered the tenders and inspected the work. He had been the Chief Inspector of Roads – North for ten years and had extensive practical experience in construction. Simmons was a practical man who had little schooling but had developed his skills on the job and worked well in the administration of construction work. At the time of the start of the Mole Creek Track, Simmons was 55 and was not in good health due to constant travel to inspect work in remote locations and in indifferent weather. He had a serious illness when the track was being made but was not incapacitated for long. *The cyclopedia of Tasmania, (illustrated): an historical and commercial review: descriptive and biographical, facts, figures, and illustrations: an epitome of progress: business men and commercial interests* (Hobart: Maitland and Krone, 1900): 139.

28 Fred Read was Sub-Inspector - West Coast when the Mole Creek Track started but he moved on to be Town Clerk at Queenstown in November 1898. On 1 February 1899, he was officially replaced by F.W. Rule, who had been an overseer for the PWD on the West Coast. Read and Rule's reports show that he had direct contact with the overseers on their end of the track during routine and regular inspections. Like Chief Inspector Simmons, the job of Sub-Inspector – West Coast meant responsibility for all public works over a large geographical area and required constant travel to examine the work such as tracks and roads. Some of the other works on the West Coast at the same time as the Mole Creek Track were a track from Rosebery to Williamsford, the Cutty Sark Track at Mount Black, North Lyell Track and Tyenna-Gordon Track.
Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, November 22, 1898;
Read to Packer, January 21, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.
Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, January 10, 1899.

29 Simmons to Packer, January 25, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.
Alex Webster to Pillinger, January 24, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

him to Hobart by express train.[30] In the meantime, he tried to mollify the anger of the NWDRA by a fulsome statement of his commitment to the track and by saying that it had already started.[31]

Pillinger's *modus operandi* with tracks was to resist, at first, for as long as he could with excuses to delay funding and the start of work, and then, if pressure continued, capitulate and throw all available resources at their construction.[32] Pillinger's statement that work had already started could only be considered to be stretching the truth to near its breaking point. It was true that the Cutty Sark Track, which was being built and it did go from Rosebery to the Pieman River (near a small mine called the Cutty Sark), just as the Mole Creek Track did. But this steep shortcut over a spur of Mount Black was no replacement for the better line of the Mole Creek Track. Pillinger said that it 'practically commences' the Mole Creek Track.[33] And with this statement it did. Pillinger's distortion meant that the Cutty Sark Track replaced part of the Mole Creek Track, but even people in his own department were concerned that this expensive little track could consume a large part of the funds for the Mole Creek Track.[34] Secretary of Public Works, Henry Packer, had to quickly assure the readers of the *Launceston Examiner*, and the members of his own department, that both tracks would be funded separately.[35] Work on the Mole Creek Track finally started in late

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30 Packer to Simmons, January 29, 1898, *PWD2*, AOT.

31 Packer to Simmons, January 24, 1898, *PWD2*, AOT:
Packer to Simmons, January 26, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

32 Pillinger used the same tactics and reaction to pressure for the Tyenna-Gordon Track, an ill advised sop to the South.

33 Ibid.

34 The Cutty Sark Track was expected to cost about £420 or about £160 per mile, compared to a total of £3,000 for the 86 miles of the original Mole Creek Track survey.
Simmons to Packer, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

35 Packer to Prichard, January 30, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

January 1898. By then three direct routes were being built to the West Coast from the three competing regions: the Mole Creek Track from the North, the Tyenna-Gordon Track from the South and the Emu Bay Railway from the North-West. Now that it was underway, construction of the Mole Creek Track fell to the PWD and its men.

Making the Mole Creek Track needed men to administer the work, men to oversee the workers and day labourers to do the hard physical work in the bush. In the hierarchy of the PWD, administration was done by salaried permanent employees: Secretary for Public Works (Henry Packer), Chief Inspector of Roads-North (George Simmons) and Sub Inspectors-West Coast (F Read and F Rule) all under the direction of the Minister for Lands and Works (Alfred Pillinger). The hierarchy, as it applied to the Mole Creek Track, is shown in Figure 3-28. This also shows the proportion of written communications (letters, telegrams, memos and reports) that passed between the different positions.

Henry Effingham Packer, the Secretary for Public Works, was the main administrator of the Mole Creek Track. He was an experienced bureaucrat and had been Secretary to the Minister for Lands and Works since 1889 and then joined the PWD as the Secretary for Public Works on 1 September 1897, with a brief to reorganise the department. Packer appeared to have the confidence of the minister to work with a great deal of autonomy.
The cyclopedia of Tasmania, 137.

Figure 3-1 Alfred Pillinger, Minister for Lands and Works[36]

Figure 3-2 Henry Packer, Secretary for Public Works[37]

Figure 3-3 George Simmons, Chief Inspector of Roads–North

Figure 3-4 Fred Read, Sub-Inspector–West Coast[38]

The overseers supervised the work gangs and carried out the directions of the department. They were crucial to the successful construction of the track and were chosen carefully. Richard Broomhall was the overseer at the eastern end of

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36 Australian Dictionary of Biography, Alfred Thomas Pillinger, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050491b.htm (accessed January 27, 2011)

37 *The cyclopedia of Tasmania*, 137.

38 *The cyclopedia of Tasmania*, 570.

the track. There were Henry Coleman, King and Robert Ellis, at the western end. King helped Coleman by taking over part of his gang in 1898 and was put in temporary charge of Coleman's gang in February 1899 when Coleman was absent.[39] Another overseer, Forsyth, was responsible for building the bridge over the Murchison River.

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On 24 January 1898, Chief Inspector George Simmons was told to ignore all his other jobs and start building the Mole Creek Track. Pillinger's delays had wasted most of the good weather. The Northerners were very unhappy with his delay so gangs were started from both ends to speed up construction. Simmons requested tents and horses from the PWD, and then told Richard Broomhall in Burnie to come to his office in Latrobe that day.[40] Broomhall arrived the next day, was briefed, equipped with tools and left Simmons' office three days later.[41] Within six days, he was camped about 11 miles along the track with five men and tents for 26.[42] The work gangs grew quickly. Three days later he had 14 men and another four days later 25 to 30 men were working.[43] At the western end, Fred Read moved Overseer Henry Coleman from making roads at Mount Lyell (a job

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39 Prichard, "Westward Ho, Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route" *Launceston Examiner*, February 23, 1899.
Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, April 1, 1898.

40 Simmons to Broomhall, January 26, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

41 Simmons to Packer, January 29, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

42 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, February 5, 1898.

43 "Mole Creek Track to Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner*, February 8. 1898;
"Track to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, February 16, 1898.

he couldn't be released from ten days earlier) to take charge of that work gang.[44] Coleman and his gang started work on the 2 February 1898.[45]

The preparations were thought to be so urgent that Secretary Packer made a day trip by train to the North to talk to Simmons, who then went to Mole Creek to inspect the eastern end of the survey.[46] By 4 February, Simmons had followed the survey as far as the Pelion Plains and returned to his home in Latrobe.[47] At the Pelion Plains, he had found nine men working the mines, prospecting and also surveyor Henry Chalmers and 'his man'. He called it 'the busy life of Mt Pelion'.[48] He set off to look at the western end and reached Zeehan on 16 February after a two day trip from Latrobe, inspecting other work along the way.[49] On 18 February, Simmons and Sub-Inspector Read followed the survey as far as the Murchison River, found a site for the suspension bridge, located some good trees for its construction and decided on its other materials.[50] He reported that work on the track was 'progressing favourably'.[51] By mid February the work gangs on the eastern and western ends were well established and work progressed steadily.

With the gangs recruited, camps set up and supplies being delivered, the next task for the overseers, Broomhall and Coleman, was to finalise the route of the track.

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44 Read to Packer, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

45 "Editorial", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, January 29, 1898; Read to Packer, January 31, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

46 Packer to Simmons, January 29, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

47 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, February 5, 1898.

48 Simmons to Packer, February 8, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

49 "Zeehan News", *Mercury*, February 17, 1898.

50 "West Coast Tracks", *Launceston Examiner*, February 21, 1898; Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* February 21, 1898.

51 "Innes' Track", *Mercury,* February 21, 1898.

They went out miles in front of the foremost of the work gangs (a small gang clearing the vegetation) to see if they could improve on Innes' route. Most of the changes made the track easier to build.[52]

Figure 3-5 Richard Broomhall[53]

Richard Broomhall made good progress at the eastern end, partly because the survey followed an established, although rough, track. Within one month, the track had been cleared for 23 miles, to Wurragarra Creek, and built for 17 miles, to the start of the February Plains (the clearing gang was six miles in front of the main gang). However, work stopped on 15 April, after two and a half months, because snow and rain had flooded streams along the track and made work impossible. For the men, bad weather meant fewer working days which meant less pay, so they returned to their farms.[54] At the end of the first working season, the eastern end of the track was cleared for 36 miles, past Mount Pelion West to a location called Pine Forest Moor, and was formed for 28 miles, to the Pelion

52 Simmons to Packer, March 15, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

53 Roger Broomhall, personal correspondence. 2010

54 Simmons to Packer, April 15, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

Plains.[55] Prichard had warned that Pillinger's obstruction would delay work until 'half of the summer' was lost and now that work had stopped he turned on Pillinger. His editorial decried 'some occult influence in Hobart' and concluded that the PWD needed a 'live political head'. [56] On the other hand, the *Mercury's* regular correspondent from Deloraine, Daniel Griffin, greeted the suspension as proof that the track was too elevated and 'not fit for man or beast', which he had pointed out 'times out of number'.[57]

In March, a month before work stopped, Prichard transferred his support from the editorial pages to the bush when he inspected the Mole Creek Track with photographer Steven Spurling III. Naturally, the resulting series of long descriptive articles were positive.[58]

Just as Prichard's, and the NWDRA's, support was unrelenting, so was Griffin's opposition. He had always wanted the route to go via the Middlesex Plains and berated everyone who did not agree with him, whether they were Innes or 'parochial cliques'.[59] For most people, making small changes to the original survey line was a normal part of improving the route, but Griffin saw it as more proof of Innes' poor work. It takes some effort to winnow Griffin's wheat from

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55 Simmons to Packer, May 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
"Concise Column", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, April 15, 1898.

56 "Editorial", *Launceston Examiner*, April 23, 1898.

57 "Country News, Deloraine", *Mercury*, April 23, 1898.

58 Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.1", *Launceston Examiner*, March 22, 1898;
Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.2", *Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898;
Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.3", *Launceston Examiner*, March 24, 1898;
Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.4", *Launceston Examiner*, March 25, 1898.

59 "The Innes Route", *Mercury*, March 16, 1898.

his voluminous chaff, but it gives rewards. His personal attacks on Innes were baseless, but he also made some stunningly accurate insights. His most prescient criticism was that when the Emu Bay Railway was completed it would remove the need for the track.[60] He warned Simmons, with some authority, that 'a pleasure awaits you – my boy' in the sections to be made between Granite Tor and the Murchison River.[61] Griffin claimed that little of Innes's survey would be used. And he was happy to accept the PWD's money to bring that about when he was employed to find an alternative to Innes' survey beyond Granite Tor. In fact, it gave him a chance to prove that he was better than Innes. In the end, he must have hoped that not too many people took his deviation because it did little more than highlight the stark differences between a poorly placed bushman's track and a well planned surveyor's line.

At the western end of the track, Overseer Coleman and a gang of about 34 men made progress from Rosebery towards the Murchison River. In late February, he was promoted to Sub-Inspector and his very large work gang was split with Overseer King.[62] Sub-Inspector Read located the wire and other parts for the suspension bridge over the Murchison River and the sawyers started cutting its timber in mid March.[63] Even before bad weather reduced their earnings, the track cutters had complained about their wages.[64] By mid April, poor weather came and one work gang was stood down, but another worked steadily towards the Murchison River. The thick forests and surrounding hills and mountains

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60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Packer to Simmons, February 24, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

63 Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.2", March 23, 1898.

64 Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.4", March 25, 1898.

protected the men in the valley of the Pieman River allowing some work to continue through winter.[65] At the end of April, 13 men remained at work and about seven miles of track, including the Cutty Sark Track, had been made. Work started on a short deviation from Innes' survey line.[66] The two miles of track needed to reach the Murchison River was formed by the end of June.[67] By late July only two men remained at work.[68]

The suspension bridge on the Murchison River was completed by Forsyth and the sawyers on 17 May even though the track hadn't yet reached it. The survey line was too rough for horses, so the wire ropes and other materials were carried on men's backs to the site.[69]

In early 1898, the Emu Bay Railway (EBR) was also well underway and moving steadily south from Guildford towards Zeehan. As it neared Rosebery, supplies were sledged across the Cutty Sark Track, which was no more than a month old. The heavy traffic cut it to pieces and complaints began.[70] It was impassable and the indignant local residents demanded that it be laid with corduroy.[71] This highlighted the inevitable problem with tracks, they could only take light loads and traffic.

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65 Read to Simmons, April 15, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

66 Read to Simmons, April 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

67 Read to unknown, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

68 Packer to Read, July 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
The *Mercury* reported that work had ceased altogether,
"The West Coast", *Mercury*, July 29, 1898.

69 "West Coast Tracks", *Launceston Examiner*, March 31, 1898;
Read to unknown, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

70 Packer to J Stirling, March 17, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

71 "West Coast Tracks, Indignation at Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner*, April 19, 1898.

In the winter of 1898 there was little work on the track, but it was not forgotten. The *Mercury* published an article in July 1898, which didn't bear a name, but the colourful style was unmistakable. Daniel Griffin had returned for another attack on the track and Innes. He repeated his claim that the suspension of work for winter was proof of the track being too high and exposed (rather than a normal response to outdoor work in West Coast winters). He was in his best incendiary form when he called the Mole Creek Track 'that egregious of failures and trail of incompetency, vested interests, and general bungling'.[72] The expected mineral riches and tourism that justified the track were 'a mixture of cool effrontery and weak kneed twaddle'.[73] Innes' survey, he reminded readers, 'had cost the colony considerably over £1,000', and that Simmons had found it 'practically worthless' other than for 'fugitives fleeing from justice'.[74] There were no facts or substance here and no response from the *Launceston Examiner.*

The unwanted truth that was emerging for the NWDRA was the track was no longer needed. The EBR moved steadily south and trains began running to the Pieman River.[75] The mineral boom at Rosebery had collapsed because the rich copper ore was contaminated with zinc, an untreatable metal at the time.[76] The changing priorities were demonstrated by the Launceston Chamber of Commerce, which had members in NWRDA, when they chose to send mail overland to the

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72 "The Mole Creek Track", *Mercury*, July 28, 1898.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 "The Overland Route", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, November 5, 1898.

76 Clive Loftus-Hills, "The zinc-lead sulphide deposits of the Read-Rosebery district. Part 2, Rosebery group", *Geological Survey Bulletin No.23*, Department of Mines, Tasmania, (1915): 96.

West Coast via the EBR, not over the Mole Creek Track.[77] Prichard was reporting less and less about its progress.

The NWDRA was loosing interest but work continued. By October 1898 Broomhall was back at work at Mount Pelion West with the instructions to 'use all possible speed to open up this route'.[78] About £2,000 of the total budget of £3,000 was spent and there was still about 34 miles of the 75 mile track to complete.[79] The first 16 days was snow and rain but Broomhall and his gangs made about six miles of new track and moved camp to near Barn Bluff. They stopped work for Christmas in mid December. Broomhall returned to Mole Creek via Cradle Mountain and the Middlesex Plains, not along the track that he was making.[80]

Work on the Western end of the track restarted around 11 January 1899 with a new overseer, Robert Ellis, who Simmons had sent to the West Coast.[81] Sub-Inspector Fred Read had become the Town Clerk at Queenstown in late November and was replaced by Rule. He had been an overseer on the Tyenna-Gordon Track, the South's competition to the Mole Creek Track and based on

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77 "Deep Lead – Pieman Track", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, November 15, 1898.

78 Simmons to Packer, October 13, 1898 PWD5,
"Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, November 1, 1898.

79 The original survey was 86 miles but the track was reduced to 75 miles by a number of deviations.

80 Broomhall to Simmons, December 15, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.
The NWDRA met again in late December wanting huts built along track and also decided to ask Innes to survey their new favourite, a track to Mount Lyell.
North and West Direct Route Association", *Launceston Examiner*, December 23, 1898.

81 Simmons to Packer, January 9, 1899, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

more tenuous goals.[82] Between the camps of the eastern and western gangs lay miles of difficult country.

Innes called the country between Granite Tor and the Murchison River the most rugged part of the whole route and this was also one of Griffin's many relentless themes. The overseers had made small deviations along the survey line, but much more was needed to overcome this geographical challenge. Despite, or perhaps because of, his years of criticism, Griffin was asked to find a better route.[83] This did not signal a truce. Even while he was negotiating his fee, Griffin sent another article to the *Mercury* reviving a story from July 1897 about workmen trapped at the Pelion Plains without food.[84] He resumed his personal attacks on Innes by describing the 'far-famed Innes track' which heads south from Gads Hill 'as if making for the raspberry beds of the Huon' (Innes' home area).[85] Finally, Griffin accepted the job and he, together with Overseer Broomhall and Sub-Inspector Coleman, found another way from Granite Tor to the Sophia River, by following the Brougham River valley. Simmons thought that it was a good route, but Broomhall and Coleman considered it to be very rough. However, they persisted because it was shorter and 'fairly surmounted the obstacles'.[86] Broomhall spent about three weeks finalising the route of the deviation.[87] It may have made the

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82 Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, November 22, 1898.

83 Griffin to Simmons, November 30, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

84 "A Trip out West, Liena and Lorinna", *Mercury*, December 3, 1898;
Griffin had claimed that bad weather had blocked Innes' survey with snow four feet deep, which a desperate journey for supplies to Liena where they arrived hungry and half-frozen.

85 Ibid.

86 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 22, 1899.

87 Ibid.

route shorter, and avoided some thick forest and scrub, but, in places it was much steeper than Innes' line.

In January 1899, Broomhall's gang made another 10 miles of track and the western gang made four miles.[88] Broomhall was aware that there was very little money left so he made the decision to 'get through and make the connection as soon as possible' even though this meant that parts of the track would be poorly made.[89] Prichard agreed that Broomhall had no alternative, saying that prospectors would be better served by a bad track than if 'there was none at all'.[90]

In February 1899, Prichard made his second, and final, trip over the track and inspected Griffin's new deviation. He left Launceston on the afternoon of Monday 13 February taking a horse to Broomhall's camp at Granite Tor.[91] Prichard and Richard Mowbray, guided by William Aylett, had a close look at some of Innes' original route at Granite Tor.[92] They found that the new route was 150 feet higher, where it crossed the exposed top of Granite Tor, before making 'a sharp downward pinch' to the headwaters of the Brougham River.[93] They then crossed the 13 unmade miles of the new survey line and reached the Pieman River on Friday 17 February.[94] Prichard considered the western gangs' track to be well made. He thought that the rest 'would be full of bogs in winter'

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88 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, February 10, 1899.

89 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route, Some Observations", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1899.

90 Ibid.

91 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 22, 1899.

92 Richard Mowbray was the co-proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* and published books of images of Tasmania. (Nic Haygarth, Personal Correspondence, January 2011)

93 Ibid.

94 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, February 18, 1899.

and regretted that the NWDRA had not been successful in its original request for £5,000.[95] Predictably, he was positive about the track and expected it to be 'a backbone from which other tracks could radiate in various directions'.[96] He described the country opened up by the track as 'some of the most magnificent scenery in the colony' and predicted that there would be 'a stream of visitors from the mainland each summer' to take the trip to the West.[97]

By early March 1899, there was 12 miles of track to build before the eastern and western gangs would meet.[98] At the western end, Overseer King was working with 24 men and the track was made for 12 miles from Rosebery, with work 'rapidly pushed on'.[99] A month later there was only 1 ½ miles remaining. On 10 April 1899, the *Launceston Examiner* reported, in a very small item, that the track parties had met and work had stopped.[100] Prichard and the NWDRA had lost interest and moved on to pursue a direct route to Mount Lyell. The news of the completion of the track was also reported as a small item in the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* which saw it as 'another inlet and outlet to civilisation for residents and those desirous of visiting the West Coast'.[101]

When it started the Mole Creek Track was going to be one of a few overland links to the West Coast. When it was completed, because of recent flurries of work, it was one of many. The most significant was the EBR, which was already running

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95 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1899.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 "West Coast Roads", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, March 2, 1899.

99 Ibid.

100 "Mole Creek Track, A Junction Effected", *Launceston Examiner*, April 11, 1899.

101 Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, April 13, 1899.

a regular service from Burnie to the Pieman River.[102] WR Reynolds and his party of four men had surveyed a railway route from Sheffield to Rosebery.[103] The Tyenna-Gordon Track was also finished (albeit as an ill-conceived alternative to the already existing Linda Track). The NWDRA was looking for a new route, this time to the emerging boom at Mount Lyell. They sent out the ubiquitous William Aylett and a surveyor, F Burrows, to find a route to Mount Lyell.[104] However, they returned, unsuccessful, after only three weeks because of continuous rain, light snow and 'thick scrub.[105] This route would be marked out in 1902 by Ewart.[106]

The PWD did the last jobs such as finalising accounts and reporting on the completed track. The Mole Creek Track was now open and it did receive some traffic, but not what its promoters had expected. It may have linked Mole Creek with Rosebery, but most of the traffic on the track was limited to packing ore a few miles between the newly developed Mount Farrell mines, under the management of Josiah Innes (EG Innes' brother), and the Emu Bay Railway at the Pieman River.[107] The later life of the track will be discussed in later chapters.

The track, rather than the people, rewards some scrutiny. It was far more complicated and sophisticated than it superficially appears. It also reveals that the

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102 "From Devonport to Mount Farrell", *North West Post*, May 23, 1899.

103 W Ross Reynolds, "Report of Exploration Surveys for Extension of North-East Dundas Tramway towards the Western District', *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)*, Paper 43, June 13, 1899.

104 "Current Topics, Overland to Mount Lyell", *Examiner*, April 8, 1899; Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, April 7, 1899.

105 "Current Topics, Mole Creek to Lyell", *Launceston Examiner*, May 10, 1899.

106 Robert Ewart, Report on Track Mt Pelion towards Gormanston, via Eldon Bluff, in Department of Lands & Surveys: Report for 1901-2, *JPPP*, (1902): 37.

107 Packer to Rule, May 30, 1899, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

technical, physical and organisational abilities of the men who built it were far greater than expected.

The Science of Track-Making

Broomhall, Coleman, King and Ellis were selected as overseers because they had experience and knowledge of track-making, and they could instruct and supervise the men in the work gangs. The first part of their job was to review Innes' survey and improve it where possible. Richard Broomhall's few reports said nothing about the rationale for his decisions for the route of the track, but his changes speak eloquently about his motivations. His first deviation was on the climb to the February Plains where he made the track slightly steeper to reach the open plains about 1,600 feet sooner than Innes' survey. This avoided clearing thick forest and the heavy track-work Innes' original line would have demanded. By comparison, forming on the plains needed little more than a series of stakes to mark the way. This saved time and money for Broomhall, but it increased the exposure of walkers to bad weather, and the softer ground was more easily damaged by heavy use.

Further south, Broomhall made the second change where the track leaves the February Plains to descend to the Pelion Plains. He made the track 100 feet lower than Innes' survey to avoid granite boulders dotted along the slope.[108] Although not strictly a deviation, the line of the track where it reaches the Pelion Plains, at the eastern end of Lake Ayr, shows the very best of route finding skills. While

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[108] Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track, No.2", *Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898.

Broomhall took the track across some soft ground on the February Plains, he, and Innes before him, did everything possible to avoid swampy ground. Firstly, the route deftly follows the solid, lightly wooded, bank of a small creek rather than the open but soft ground next to the creek. It then crosses a large bog by effectively linking a series of small solid, and dry, rises in the wetland with corduroy and a small causeway.

At Mount Pelion West, Broomhall made one of the most significant changes to the route. Innes said that this 'rugged old mountain' frowned down at him, but he did find a very good line up its flanks.[109] Broomhall undid much of Innes' work and made the track steeper, but almost two miles shorter. All the work here needed thick forest cleared and substantial ground-work in the steep cross-slope. The new line was steeper, but it is still a comfortable grade, which today's walkers on the Overland Track can confirm. Broomhall also made a short deviation at Mount Inglis, again to avoid clearing forest and the need for heavy ground-work.[110] All of his changes show that Broomhall tipped the balance towards making the track easier and cheaper to construct, at the expense of steeper grades and increased exposure for walkers. East of Granite Tor, Broomhall didn't move the track far from Innes' survey line (even though Innes had suggested a deviation here), but west of Granite Tor he followed a completely different course.

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109 EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", *JPPP*, Vol. 37, Paper 43, August 3, 1897, 4.

110 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 22, 1899.

Griffin, assisted by Broomhall and Coleman, made the longest deviation to the survey between Granite Tor and the Sophia River. Without inspecting Innes' survey line it is difficult to say whether Griffin's route was better. Griffin's new route, however, was certainly more elevated, more exposed and has the steepest grades of the whole track. This is ironic considering Griffin's many confrontational articles lambasting Innes for laying out an exposed and elevated route. This deviation was, however, seven miles shorter and avoided the thick scrubby valley of Granite Creek, which would have been difficult and expensive to clear.

At the western end of the track, Coleman made one change to the survey line, about three miles on the western side of the Murchison River. He claimed it was shorter and easier to make because it avoided rocky ground.[111] Sub-Inspector Read added that it was flatter, had 'a good quartz bottom' about 8 inches below the surface and would save £500 over the survey line.[112] However, his wildly overestimated savings should have been obvious to Simmons and Packer, but they approved the change.[113]

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111 Read to Packer, May 3, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

112 Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
While Broomhall was encouraged to make changes to the eastern end of the route, it took five letters from Read to Chief Inspector Simmons and to Secretary Parker before his one change was approved;
Read to Simmons, May 21, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
Read to Simmons, May21, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
Simmons to Read, May 24, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
Simmons to Packer, May 24, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
Packer to Simmons, May 25, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

113 Read inferred that Innes' route would cost £253 per mile to build and his deviation would cost £83 per mile, however, the average cost of construction of the whole track was only £39 per mile.
Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
Simmons to Packer, July 8, 1899, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

There was no technical specification for the track, as there would have been for a road. Before work started, Secretary for Public Works, Packer issued the only instructions in one telegram, 'Mole Creek Track – This is to be a horse track six feet wide'.[114] The almost complete absence of direction meant that the PWD relied solely on the overseers' experience of building pack tracks and explains Packers insistence that the work 'must have the best overseers'.[115]

Many people knew, or thought they knew, how the track should be made because the details of track-making were discussed widely in the newspapers. The overseers learnt from working on other tracks or roads, either as contractors to the PWD, like Broomhall, or as part of the PWD work gangs, like Coleman. There was plenty of opportunity to learn in the last quarter of the nineteenth century because in and around the West Coast, about 200 tracks, with a combined length of 3,000 miles, were made.[116] Most were made by the PWD rather than put out to tender.

If experience was the source of the knowledge for the overseers, and verbal instruction from them to their workers, then the technical details of track-making came from road building. A track was simply a narrow, and less substantially built road and relied on the same general principles. The few PWD tenders for tracks used the same standard specification as roads, just altered by hand to suit

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114 Packer to Simmons, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

115 Ibid.

116 Finance Papers 1876-1900, *JPPP*; estimate based on £40/mile, about 200 tracks were made.

tracks.[117] This was particularly relevant for the eastern end of the track because, only three years earlier, Richard Broomhall had won PWD tender based on a road specification.[118] The close relationship between tracks and roads in the nineteenth century was also shown in Innes' instructions where he was told to find the route for a 'track or road'. Road-making texts of the period also included tracks as a small, but relevant part of road-making.[119] Interestingly, track-making methods were similar across Australasia as shown by a consistency between Tasmanian tenders, Australasian road making texts and New Zealand track specifications.[120] This may be convergence in response to a common purpose or quick communication between professionals in the colonies.

The Tasmanian PWD tenders for tracks gave detailed specifications and provided additional insight into the physical remains of the Mole Creek Track. They were divided into sections with headings: 'clearing and grubbing', 'forming', 'excavation in cuttings', 'side cuttings', 'surface forming', 'culverts generally',

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117 Tender (No.3), March 21, 1895, *PWD 18/1/2539, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 55 Vic 56 Item 2716 - Branch Road: Railton to Sunnyside*, AOT;
Tender (No.4), May 12, 1896, *PWD18/1/2539*, AOT;
Tender, Track between Tullah and Bluff River (Clearing), July 14, 1923, *PWD1/1/242 General Correspondence, 22/7-5 & 22/12-8 Innes Track 1897*, AOT;
Tender, *PWD18/1/1155 Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 51 Vic 46 Item 1221 - Branch Road: Trooper's Track from Lefroy to Alford*, AOT;
Tender – Track from Great Lake Road to Liffey Falls, December 6, 1916, *PWD24/1/5, Correspondence and associated papers relating to construction and development of tracks, including tourist tracks, generally and in municipalities*, AOT;
Tender, *PWD18/1/588, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 48 Vic 45 Item 630 - Branch Road: Hall's Track to German Town, Upper Piper*, AOT.

118 Tender (No.3), March 21, 1895, *PWD18/1/2539*, AOT.

119 JM Coane, HE Coane, JM Coane Jnr, *Australasian Roads, A Treatise on the Location Design, Construction and Maintenance of Roads, Pavements, etc*, (Melbourne: George Robertson & Co, 1915).

120 Specification, Horse Track Hohonu to Dunganville, October 1898, County of Grey, New Zealand, History House Greymouth.

'timber culverts – materials' and 'ditches'.[121] These details allowed a more informed examination of the track. Beyond this, study of the track revealed details that weren't in the tenders.

The track was more sophisticated than suspected by most modern observers. This was no roughly formed piece of levelled earth with the occasional log thrown across the frequent creeks. It was an engineered pack track, almost a road, but not quite as wide and only marginally less substantial. Figure 3-6 shows the cost of the major parts of the job. The Murchison Bridge was the most expensive single job, and it ate into the money available for the rest of the track.[122] Forming: making the track surface, culverts and corduroy, was the most costly work, but the cost of clearing the vegetation off the line of the track was also quite substantial.

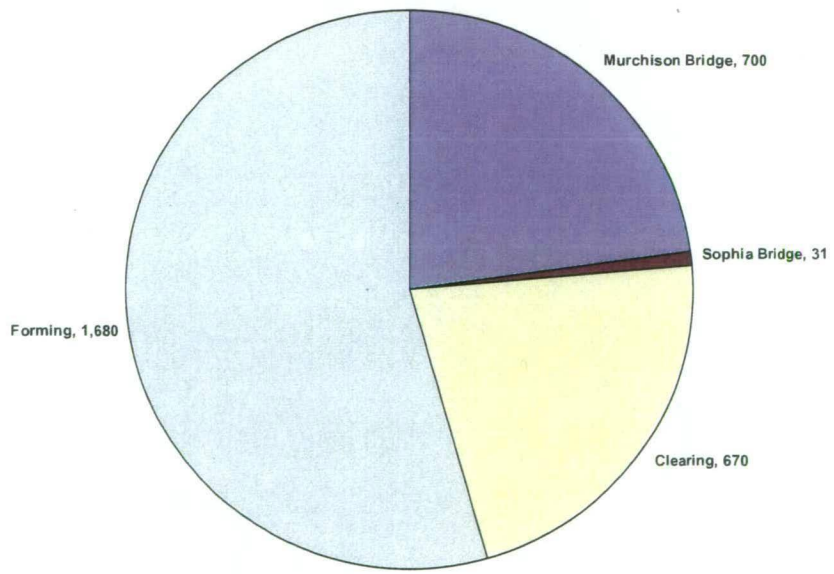

Figure 3-6 Construction Costs (in pounds £) [123]

121 Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155*, AOT.

122 The budgets for PWD works were strictly followed and in the case of the Mole Creek Track, the overrun was about £82.

123 The actual cost of construction of the bridges is known, whereas the cost of forming and clearing taken from Innes' estimate of these costs

Clearing was more properly called 'clearing and grubbing'. A small party of men cleared the final route marked by the overseers. Road and track making specifications required that the 'line of clearing' be 'perfectly straight' or in a 'regular curved line'.[124] The smooth turns of pack tracks are one of their signature features, but straight lines in this mountainous country didn't seem feasible. Surprisingly, the first 49 miles has 17 sections of straight track varying from 1,000 to 6,000 feet long. In total 19% of the track was straight. The best example of straight track is between Mount Inglis and Lake Windermere. The same alignment was followed until it encountered an obstruction, the track skirted it, and then resumed the original bearing. Walking east on this part of the track Mount Oakleigh is a landmark directly in front and Mount Inglis directly behind. This makes navigation easy in good weather, even if the track, which was only marked by stakes on these open plains, was lost. A consistent alignment also makes the track easier to follow in poor weather. This wasn't mentioned as part of the design of the track, but it is unlikely that it was a fortunate fluke. It is likely that this was part of the conscious 'laying out' of the route by EG Innes.

Figure 3-7 Stakes on Plain West of Lake Will, Mount Oakleigh in the Background (Brown 2000)

124 Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT.

Figure 3-8 Clearing on Mole Creek Track 1898[125]

'Clearing' was defined as all vegetation 'standing, lying or bedded in ground to be cleared away and all small stuff to be burned off' to a specified width.[126] The cleared width was not specified for the Mole Creek Track, so it was left to the overseers' judgement. It was reported as between eight and ten feet, and confirmed by a photograph taken just after the track was made.[127] This was consistent with Victorian practices where bridle (horse) tracks were cleared to 10 feet.[128] This is the minimum width that allows a horse with saddle-packs to sway along the track without striking vegetation. Wide clearing also reduced problems with later regrowth into the line of the track and trees falling across the track.

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125 S Spurling III, 1898, Author's Collection.

126 Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT.

127 Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.2", *Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898.

128 Coane, Coane, Coane, *Australasian Roads,* 494;
However, other tracks were cleared wider, such as 25 feet for the Linda Track and 20 feet for a New Zealand pack track.

Overseer Broomhall always recorded the extent of clearing and used stock phrases to describe it, ranging from 'open plains', 'light scrub and small timber', 'dense scrub & large timber' to 'heavy myrtle scrub and timber'.[129] A large proportion of the route didn't need clearing because Innes and Broomhall avoided thick forest wherever they could. The distances of the types of clearing are shown in the Figure 3-9.

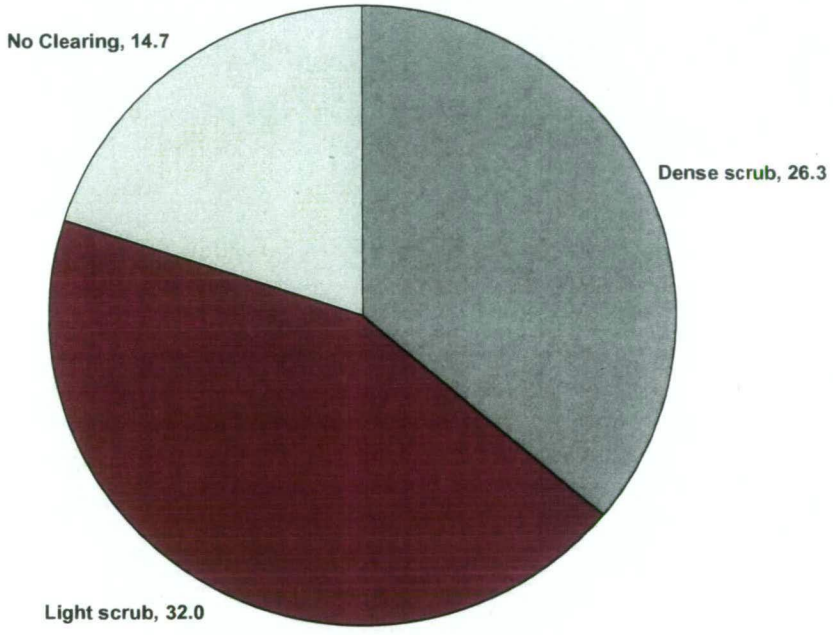

Figure 3-9 Types of Clearing on Mole Creek Track (given in miles)

The second part of removing vegetation, 'grubbing', meant digging out tree roots and they had to be 'run two feet underground'.[130] Unfortunately grubbing was not easily observed and there were no contemporary comments about it. The excavations done for this thesis showed no signs of root holes or other weaknesses in the track.

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129 Broomhall to Simmons, April 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

130 Tender, July 14, 1923, *PWD1/1/242,* AOT.
The holes the grubbing made had made were filled with stones or earth, which had be rammed in six-inch layers. No timber, mud, or 'other unfit material' was permitted to be used to fill the holes to ensure that the track was solid.

* * *

Once the first small work gang had 'cleared and grubbed' the route, the men in the main work gang formed the track. The broad level path that they made, which gently winds its way around the ridges and spurs of the mountains and valleys, was a signature feature of graded pack tracks.[131]

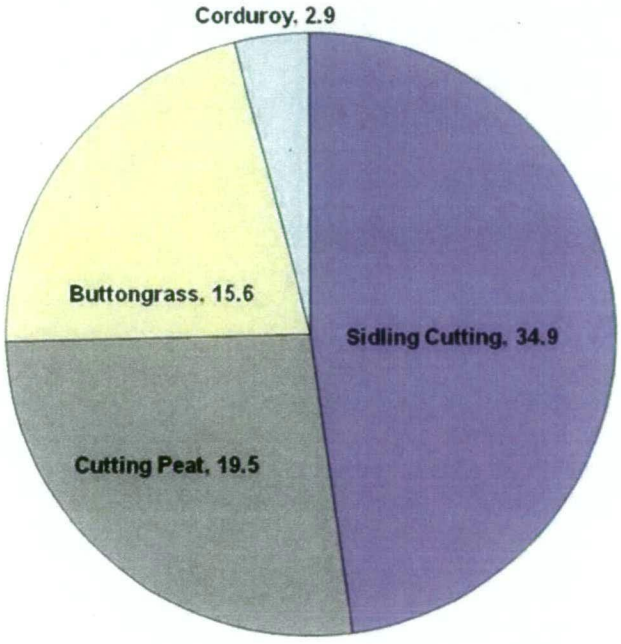

Figure 3-10 Distances of Different Types of Forming (miles)

Broomhall also used a number of stock phrases to describe forming work. He referred to 'corduroy', 'cutting button-grass', 'cutting away peat' and 'sideling cutting'. The largest proportion of the track was made by 'sideling cutting', because much of it had to be cut into the sides of hills, mountains and gullies. 'Cutting out' peat and button-grass was easier work and done on the open plains.

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131 Since there was no guidance on how to build the Mole Creek Track information has been gleaned from tender specifications for other tracks and roads, some of Overseer Broomhall's reports, contemporary observations and excavations with an archaeologist made for this thesis.

'Corduroy', the most labour intensive construction method, was avoided as much as possible and only a short distance was made, as can be seen in Figure 3-10.

The amount of labour put into each type of forming is demonstrated by its total cost. 'Sideling cutting' was the most expensive because it needed extensive ground-work and a lot of the track was made this way. Culverts, small creek crossings, were also very labour intensive and many had to be made in this well-watered country. 'Cutting away peat', a relatively easy job, was significant because of the distance formed, whereas the cost of corduroy was significant for the opposite reason. Very little of the track was made with corduroy, but its high cost per mile made it significant.

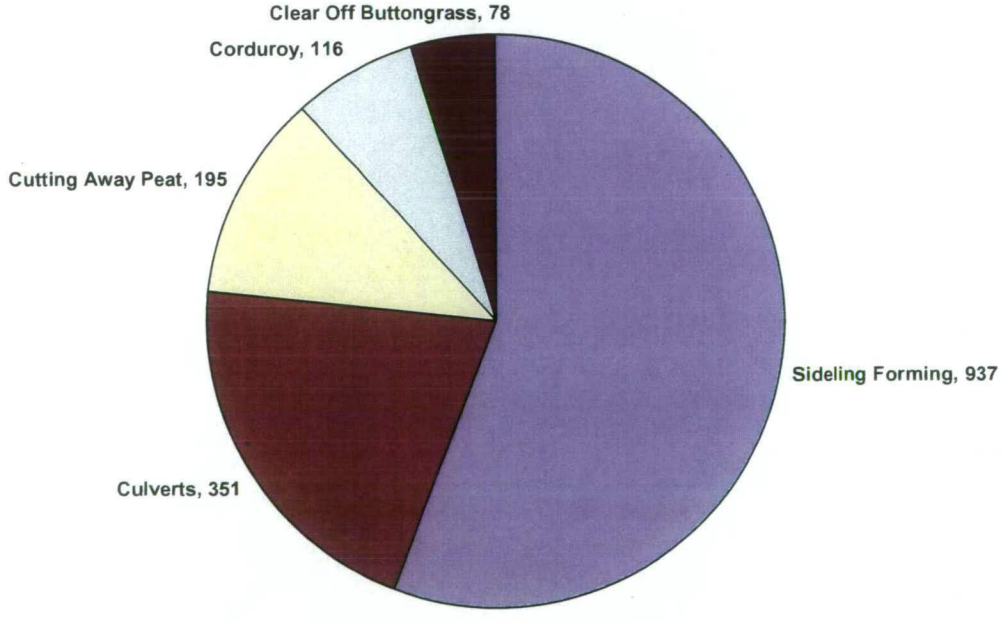

Figure 3-11 Cost of Forming, excluding Bridges, (Pounds £)[132]

The first technical detail of track-making was its width. This was the only instruction given, and it was to be six feet wide. Contemporary sources and field

132 Costs of different forming is based on tenders for other tracks and some estimates where information was not available

work show that the eastern end conformed to this standard. Broomhall said that he made the track nominally six feet wide and up to ten feet, and Prichard described it as eight feet wide at the February Plains and near the Oakleigh Range, now the Arm River Track.[133] Field work found the width to be between six and 7 ½ feet. However, sections at the western end were only between 3 ¾ and 4 ¼ feet wide.[134] The absolute minimum width should be five feet, which was just enough for horses to move easily.[135]

Figure 3.11 shows the most significant cost was 'sideling cutting', also called side cutting, sideling, sidelong and benching, but all refer to the technique of forming a track across a slope. The track was cut into the side of the slope to make it level, as shown in Figure 3-12 (from the specification of a tender won by Broomhall in 1895).[136]

The figure shows that the surface was made by a technique called 'cut and fill' where the earth was dug from the uphill half of the track and the spoil used to form the lower half. This technique minimised the amount of digging and was widely used.[137] Excavations of five undisturbed sections of track at the eastern end and two at the western end confirmed that it was made by 'cut and fill' both

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133 Broomhall to Simmons, April 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.
Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.2", *Launceston Examiner,* March 23, 1898.

134 Measured on some undisturbed sections of track at Mount Swallow.

135 Coane, Coane, Coane, *Australasian Roads*, 494;
PJ Mahoney, "Graded Pack Tracks: an Unappreciated Historic Resource." *Australian Historical Archaeology* 9 (1991): 76 – 78.

136 Tender (No.3), March 21, 1895, *PWD 18/1/2539*, AOT.

137 Coane, Coane, Coane, *Australasian Roads,* 494, 488;
recommended 'in sidelong ground' that the amount of cutting and filling should be balanced and that this equated to '3 ft. are in cutting and 2 ft. in bank' for a five foot track. Other specifications for tracks called for a fully benched track where the whole of the track is excavated and all the spoil is discarded.
Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT.

by the profile and the strata of the subsurface soil. Excavations were authorised by the Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry Tasmania. Initial work was done under the supervision of an archaeologist and later by the author alone based on the experience and training on the earlier digs.

One cross-section excavated on the Arm River Track, revealed a surface that appeared untouched by wear and erosion. The cleared track surface is shown in Figure 3-14.[138] This, and other sections, showed that the surface of the track was not simply levelled earth, but made to a careful design. The subtleties of the construction all aimed at protecting the track from erosion by water (a constant problem in this climate) and from wear by walkers. The track sloped slightly inwards to the hill to avoid water running down the line of the track and scouring it.[139] This was evident because the excavations were done in wet weather and the drain was flowing with water, keeping the surface of the track relatively free of water. One hundred years after it was made, and with much of the surface choked with vegetation, the drain, called a table drain, was working as it had been intended.[140] This was a great endorsement of the design and the construction.

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138 The profile of the track shows some interesting detail. The most trivial is the angle of the cut into the slope is 2 to 1, which is much steeper than the PWD specification for the Linda Track of 1 to 1. This means that the bank was potentially less stable and may be inclined to slip onto the track surface. However, the advantage of the steeper embankment was that it reduced the amount of excavation required.

139 Coane, Coane, Coane, *Australasian Roads,* 489;
Many tracks and roads were formed with a crown to allowed water to shed off the track The Linda Track required a crown 3 inches higher than the edges.

140 The excavation revealed detail of the drain which was cut into the inside 8 inches of the track as a V shape about 8 inches deep and filled with quartz pebbles between ¼ and 1 inch in diameter.

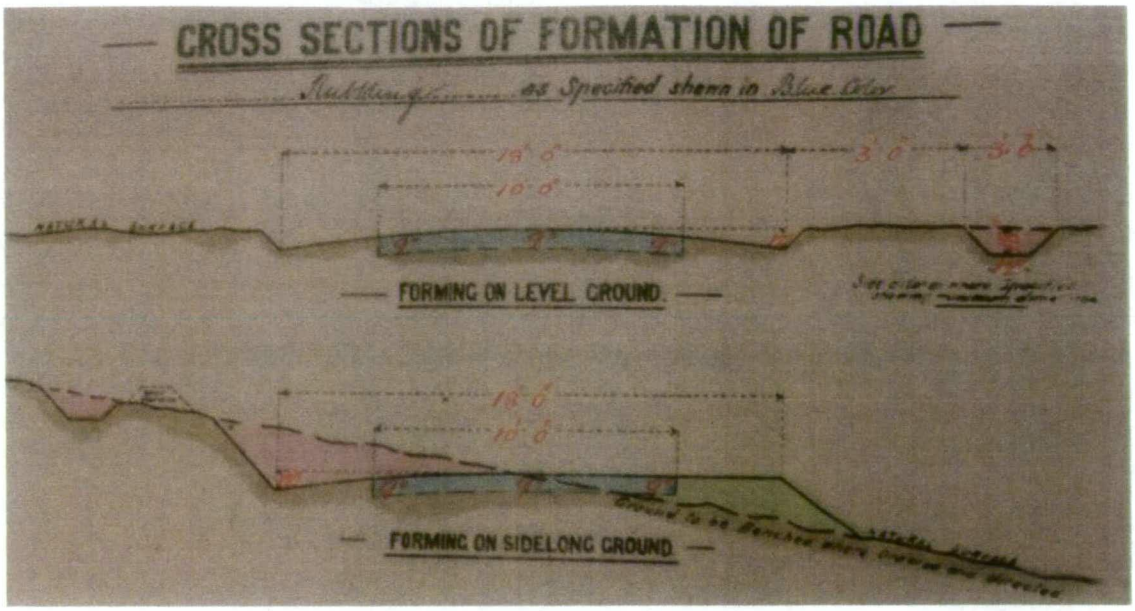

Figure 3-12 Detail Specification for Track[141]

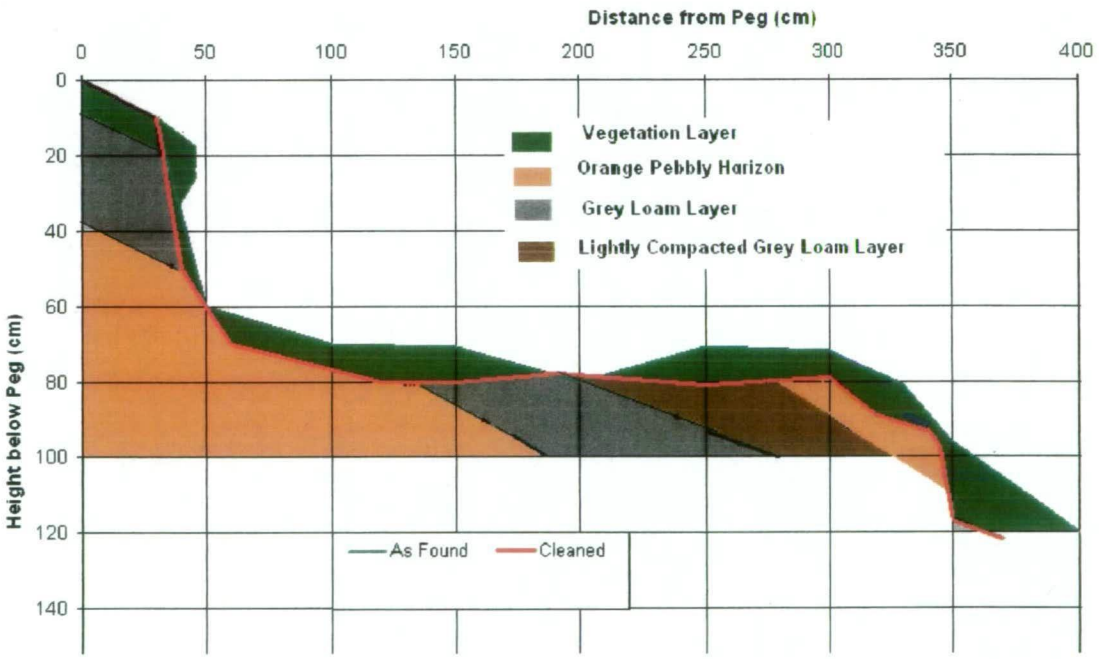

Figure 3-13 Cross Section of Excavated Track

141 Ibid.

The field work showed drainage at work and it was also proscribed in the PWD road and track specifications. They specified table, mitre and side drains. Only table drains were found.[142] The cross-section of sidelong road, Figure 3-12, shows the angled track profile and the table drains used in general road making, and found on this track.[143] Mitre drains were required 'to turn the water across the path at frequent intervals so as to minimise scour', but none were located in the limited area of the excavations.[144] Prichard made the only comment about drains because he was concerned that some of the sideling at Mount Pelion West was poorly drained. Here shallow sandstone base rock wouldn't allow a table drain to be cut. Water couldn't drain and would 'make the track a bog or carry yards of it into the valley below'.[145] The track was made of a shallow layer of soil held in place by a log along its outer side. Broomhall knew that it was poorly made, but he couldn't do any better without blasting the 'toe rock'.[146] True to Prichard's prediction a landslip has carried away some of this section of track.[147]

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142 Table drains run along the side of the track, whereas mitre drains direct the water away from the track.
Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT.

143 Coane says that 'where catchwater ditches cannot be afforded, it is better in sidelong cutting to make the finished surface always slope transversely towards the hill', which describes table drains. Catchwater ditches are defined as drains cut into the slope above a track or road to intercept run-off. When they are not made, the water run-off from the slope is best captured by the table drain on the inside of the track and stops it from flowing across the width of the track. Catchwater ditches, probably called side ditches in the specifications, have not been found on the Mole Creek Track.

144 Coane, Coane, Coane, *Australasian Roads,* 494;
Mitre drains have not been located as erosion, wear, siltation and vegetation along much of the track would make them difficult to find.

145 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 23, 1899;
"Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1899.

146 Broomhall to Simmons, December 15, 1898 *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT;
Other details for sideling forming provided by the specifications but could not be confirmed by excavations were allowances for settlement, the extent of grubbing and use of 'improper' materials. 'Improper Materials' were defined as 'timber, mud, slurry, roots, or any unfit material' which would not provide a solid fill and cause the track to be weak.

147 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 21, 1899.

Figure 3-14 Track with Surface Vegetation Material Cleaned (Brown 2007)

Figure 3-15 Excavation of Track, Loose Layer Cleaned Off (Brown 2008)

Another subtlety was hardening of the track surface, called rubbling, where stones are imbedded in the crown of the track to protect it from wear. This was widely used on tracks with frequent traffic.[148] This was found in some excavations, as shown in Figure 3.15. Broomhall also used loose stones, when available, to form the outer edge of the track.

Figure 3-16 Outer Track Edge, Viewed from Above (Brown 2007)

Sideling in soil, which is described above, demonstrates most of the nuances of sideling making. Broomhall made some minor changes to this technique when he made sideling through rocky ground, which he called 'rocky sideling cutting'. Rock doesn't wear but solid rock could not be excavated and was avoided. Rocky sideling was made when plenty of loose rock was available. The outer edge of the track was formed from large rocks to make a robust retaining wall. The inside

148 Tender (No.3), March 21, 1895, *PWD 18/1/2539*, AOT;
Rubbling was a thick layer of gravel and stones placed on centre of the track, its main wear area.

was filled and the surface packed with smaller rocks, Figure 3.16.[149] Sideling cutting was labour intensive, because it involved digging and moving soil or manipulating a lot of rock.

The open plains were easier than sidling cutting for the track-cutters because there was no forest to clear and the track was formed by simply clearing off shallow rooted button-grass or heath. Button-grass plains are a typical West Coast Tasmanian landscape and they, and the high heathy plains, look park-like in summer. At their best, the plains had a naturally occurring solid layer of gravel or rock just below the surface. Prichard noted that 'little or nothing' had been done for the miles between Pine Forest Moor and Lake Curran other than 'knocking over' a few tussocks and 'a bit of a rough crossing over a creek'.[150] He said that 'the peat should be stripped to the gravel, the same as the Linda track' to expose the solid rock just below the button grass.[151]

However, the plains, such as the February Plains, were often water-logged, and under the benign vegetation was a thick layer of soft peat which made a terrible walking surface. Prichard said it was like 'travelling over a huge sponge' and

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149 In some cases, the rock making up the track surface was smaller than the rock available nearby and also the unweathered surfaces were not stained, indicating that the rock was broken to the correct size.

150 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 21, 1899;
Broomhall used a number of phrases to describe the different types of minor surface forming; 'loose stones cleared off', 'cleared off button grass' and 'levelling holes'.

151 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1899;
Stripping was not part of a normal track or road specifications but a hand-written note was added to the Linda Track tender, which called for the ground to be cut down to 'solid bottom' and to have a batter on the cutting and drains at 330 foot intervals. This also requested that the surface of the track be crowned and that all excavated material to be thrown more than 50 cm from the edge of the cutting.
Tender, *PWD18/1/1885 Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution, 53 Vic 51 Item 2007 - Branch Road: Marlborough to Linda,* AOT.

complaints continued about this section of the track for years.[152] A specification for the Linda Track is relevant here. It required 'cleaning the surface of all objectionable material', which meant removing the vegetation and excavating to a solid base.[153] But not all plains had a solid layer under the peat. They could only sustain light traffic before they cut up into bog holes. The only solution was to lay corduroy. Heavy use of track made on soft ground, such as on the Cutty Sark Track and at the Sophia Flat, would cut it to pieces and could only be made trafficable by corduroy. A traveller called Sophia Flat, east of the Sophia Bridge 'a button-grass swamp' where his mules 'were within an ace of being bogged every 20 yards' and when they went down they had 'trouble to get out again'. [154]

Corduroy may have been the last resort on very soft ground, such as marshes and swamps, but it was avoided because it was time consuming to build. In all, only about 3 miles of corduroy were made along the whole track.[155] Corduroy was built of a closely packed layer of logs laid across the line of travel. This made a solid base, which was sometimes covered with some sand or gravel.[156]

Broomhall stated that he and his gang made both light brush and heavy corduroy at Lake Ayr.[157] I found three beds of corduroy, six feet side with a total length of

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152 "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.2", *Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898.

153 Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT.

154 JW Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount", Tasmanian Mail, April 28, 1900.

155 Broomhall to Simmons, April 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

156 PWD specifications for part of the Linda Track, some general reference material and excavations give background into how this was made.
Tender, *PWD18/1/1885,* AOT.

157 Broomhall to Simmons, April 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.
According to some specifications, construction should start with a bed of sand or 'some dry porous material, when at all obtainable'. There was no indication of this during the excavations but any dry porous material would have become saturated with water, mud and silt after more than 100 years in this marshy ground.

210 feet by probing the subsoil to strike the cords.[158] One of the cord beds was partially excavated. It showed that the cords were two to five inches diameter.[159] They were probably originally laid against each other but now they are spaced between 1 to 5 inches apart, because of the bark had rotted away and some cords had broken.[160] This was light brush corduroy but heavy corduroy was not located. A photograph at Mount Farrell shows heavy corduroy was made of large pieces of split timber, rather than the small round brush used at Lake Ayr, Figure 3.18.

Figure 3-17 Detail of Corduroy Exposed Compared to 2 Metre Tape – viewed from above (Brown 2008)

158 The cords, also called spars in the Linda Track specification, were cut six feet long and laid against each other.

159 The Linda Track specification stated that they should be a minimum of six inches diameter This may be for 'heavy' corduroy.

160 A layer of 'blinding', sand or a 'good gritty material', to block the gaps between the cords was not found, nor was a top bed of gravel required in the Linda Track specification. It is clear that another technique for making brush corduroy by overlapping small round timber, less than 2 inch diameter, in a 'shingle fashion', to make a bed about 16 inches thick was not used;
Coane, Coane, Coane, *Australasian Roads,* 87-88.

Figure 3-18 Detail of Corduroy Section of Mole Creek Track at Tullah in 1899 (Launceston Community History 2003)

* * *

Rivers, creeks and watercourses needed different approaches. The best was to avoid them completely. The next best was to cross where they were less formidable. It was remarkable that only two substantial bridges were needed considering that the track crossed 75 miles of mountainous country watered by over six feet of rain every year.[161] Judicious laying out of the route by Innes avoided a number of major rivers and streams, or crossed others at their headwaters, but it was impossible to avoid every watercourse and, in addition to the bridges, at least 117 culverts and five fords were made. A ford was the simplest crossing.[162] It is a shallow part of a creek which allows a walker or

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161 Charles Whitham, *Western Tasmania, A Land of Riches and Beauty* (Queenstown: Board of Management, Robert Sticht Memorial Library, 1949): 49.

162 The fords were on all on Broomhall's eastern end of the track and these were; on a side stream to Wurragarra Creek, at Wurragarra Creek near Oakleigh Divide, Douglas Creek on the Pelion Plains, Forth River at Frog Flats and Bluff River at Lake Will. Broomhall also did not mention the small ford across a side-stream to Wurragarra Creek but it is still clear and well

horse to cross without being swept away. Prichard crossed the ford at Wurragarra Creek. His first thought that the 'bottom was stony and the bank looked good', but his horse sunk into the bank, and refused to move.[163] Some of the ford still survives. It has two lines of rocks crossing the creek between two deep pools, see Figure 3-19. Innes described the natural crossing of the Bluff River at Lake Will as 'a small, shallow stream, with a hard gravely bottom, fordable at all times'.[164]

Figure 3-19 Wurragarra Creek – Part of Ford, Looking East (Brown 2006)

From these comments and field observations, it appears that a good ford took advantage of natural crossing points with access from gently sloping, and solid, banks to a section of stream that was shallow and had a solid rocky bed. The

built. However, he did report making a ford at Douglas Creek near the Pelion Plains Huts but in this case this energetic stream has since destroyed all sign of it.
Broomhall to Simmons, April 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

163 "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.2", *Launceston Examiner*, March 23, 1898; Broomhall hadn't mentioned working on this ford but Prichard implied that it was a natural ford which had been 'improved';
"Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 21, 1899.

164 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 5.

stream-bed was made level, where possible, for even footing. The flow of the stream at the crossing point couldn't be too strong, otherwise people or horses may be swept away.

Culverts were made to cross most of the small streams and occasional watercourses. The section of the track, which is now taken over by the Arm River and Overland Tracks, needed 40 within nine miles. Generally these small earth covered bridges spanned between three to 16 feet, but some were up to 45 feet long.[165] The general arrangement for culverts is shown in Figure 3-20 and is described in more detail in the following section.

Culverts were built by laying a substantial round log, called a side-log into each bank of the watercourse.[166] They were dug into the banks so that finished track surface of the culvert was level with the track on either side.[167] The side-logs in the banks of a small stream are shown in Figure 3-21 because the top of the culvert has been washed away. One remaining bearer is still in place on the right-hand side.

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165 Technically culverts are simple timber beam bridges but the main point of differentiation between bridges and culverts for the track-cutters was that culverts were covered with earth and bridges were not. The construction methods were determined from the surviving, albeit decayed, structures and detailed PWD technical specifications for other tracks and roads.

166 The culverts on the Mole Creek Track show a wide range of sizes of logs used for the side-logs whereas PWD specifications call for a minimum size. These specifications also called for the length of these logs increased with the span of the culvert to provide additional support for the increased weight of the culvert. Those on the Mole Creek Track were about 13 feet long.

167 PWD specifications for other tracks and roads ask for 'sleeper-logs' which support the side-logs, but none were found during field work. If the water course was deep multiple side-logs would be used to build up the height as shown by a culvert at Mount Pelion West.

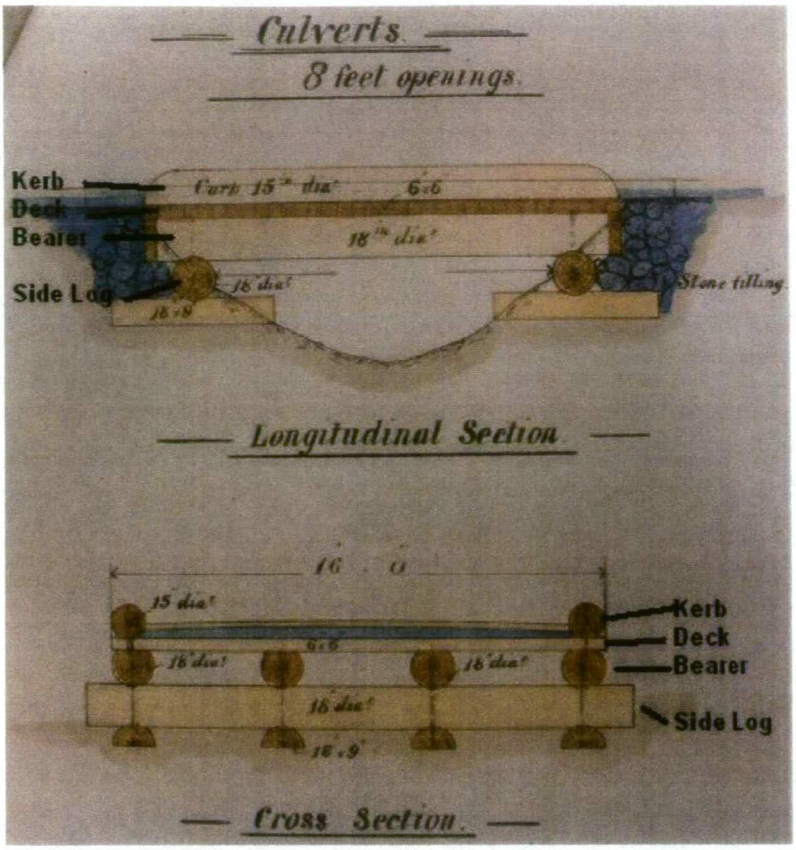

Figure 3-20 Arrangement of Culvert [168]

Figure 3-21 Side Logs and a Bearer in Culvert on Arm River Track (Brown 2006)

168 Tender, *PWD18/1/588*, AOT.

Next three logs – bearers - were placed between the side-logs in each bank.[169] Figure 3-22 shows a bearer in another eroded culvert, with a few deck logs held in place by a kerb log. Round timber across the three bearers made up the deck of the culvert.[170] The deck was sandwiched between the substantial outer bearers and a smaller kerb, which also held the earth and stone walking surface of the culvert.

Scouring and rot have destroyed most of the culverts on the Mole Creek Track, even though pieces of many remain. Almost all the soil coverings of the decks have been washed away, but one culvert has been preserved by siltation.[171] They could be covered by a foot of soil or more to be level with the track on the banks.[172] Abutments or cuttings into each bank were made to improve the approach to the culverts.[173]

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169 Specifications require a notch to be cut into the side-logs to allow them to seat the bearers but none were found. More bearers were used as the width of the track increased, for example four are shown in the sketch for a track 16 feet wide. In the tender specifications, there were directions to level the top of the beams by adzing but there was no indication of this on any of the culverts examined.

170 These were a wide range of sizes, 2 to 20 inches diameter, probably reflecting the branches and truck of trees felled during clearing.

171 The structure of the culvert was determined by a small excavation even though the timbers had decayed.

172 The soil from the cuttings appears to have been the fill material for the culvert. The base of the culvert was eight feet wide to allow the walking surface to be the required six feet wide

173 The packing material was required by the general specifications to be rammed. Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT.

Figure 3-22 Bearer, Deck and Kerb of Partially Collapsed Culvert

Figure 3-23 Partially Collapsed Culvert showing Bearers, Some Remnant Deck and one Kerb, and some later modifications (Brown 2006)

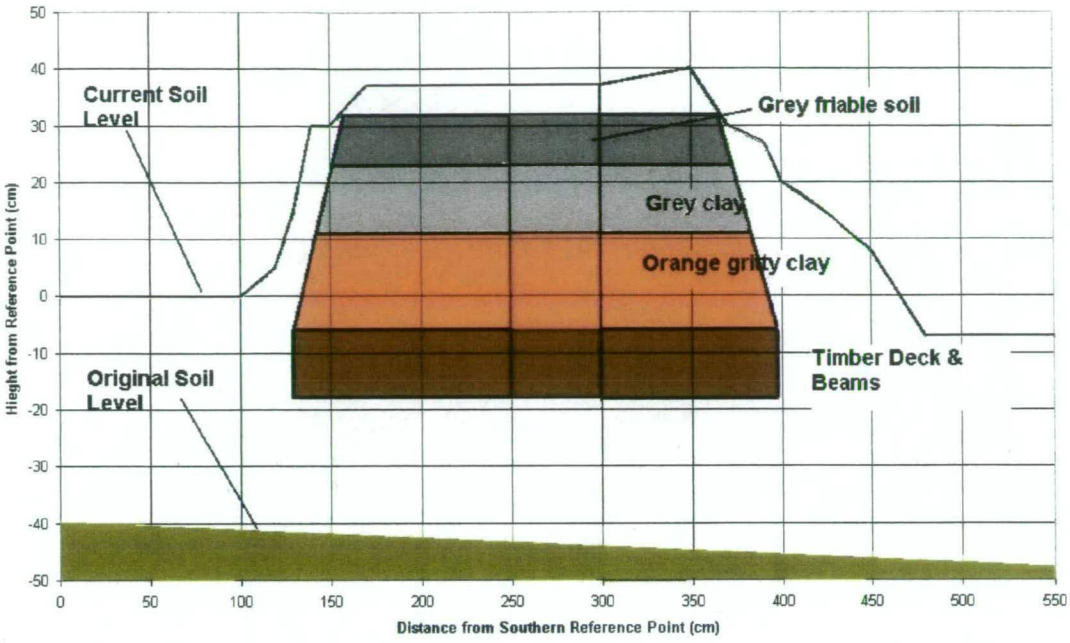

Figure 3-24 Cross Section of Culvert at Lake Ayr

Figure 3-25 Oakleigh Creek Culvert – Abutment and Remaining Deck

Understanding the best timber for the culverts was something that the bush-farmers would already know. Field work provides plenty of evidence of their choice, both in the surviving timbers and in the stumps of the trees felled for the work. The specifications for other tracks and roads called for stringy bark, blue gum or peppermint, but field work revealed that King William Pine was also widely used and is the majority of the surviving logs.[174]

Most of the track was made to a high standard but no single part was more striking, or more expensive, than the bridge over the Murchison River, just a few miles from the modern township of Tullah. Here a suspension bridge, spanning 150 feet, hung high between the banks of the river. In 1900, JW Lord called it 'a fine bridge, and looking at it you wonder how on earth it ever got there. To see such a structure in such country [was] a great surprise'.[175] It needed to be a fine bridge because it had absorbed about £700, almost 25% of the total vote for the track.[176] Sub-Inspector Read had originally said that it would be a 'few pounds over that of the Collingwood' (on the Linda Track) which had cost £202.[177]

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174 Tender, October 13, 1886, *PWD18/1/1155,* AOT;
King Billy pine was not named in specifications because it isn't commonly found in much of Tasmania but its excellent weathering characteristics were recognised by Broomhall and his gangs. The logs that made up the culverts appeared to be 'sound, straight and stripped of all bark' as stated in specifications but the ends were pointed, the characteristic of being cut with an axe, rather than 'sawn or trimmed off square' which was requested. Other parts of the specifications which appear to have been considered were that the culverts were to be 'generally square to road'. Years of erosion in some places and sedimentation in others make it difficult to determine whether the inlets and outlets to the culver wide enough to 'prevent choking at entrance or interference with the free flow of water away from the culvert'. The foundations, the side-logs, were to be built on solid ground, and this appears to have been complied with as none of the culverts examined had sunk.

175 Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount".

176 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24. 1899.

177 His reasons for the high final cost were that it was 20 feet longer, material was difficult to get to the site and the Collingwood Bridge had reused materials from an earlier bridge.
Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD 18/1/343*, AOT.

Everyone agreed that a suspension bridge was the best way to cross the Murchison River. Innes first suggested it when he was making the survey in 1897, Chief Inspector George Simmons agreed and Sub-Inspector Read too, saying that it would be the 'cheapest and most suitable'.[178] It was the most suitable because the deck would hang high above the flood levels of the fast flowing Murchison River and it wouldn't need piers or supports in the river, which for a normal bridge, could be swept away by floods. Prichard approved of the Murchison Bridge as well, which he said was 'well out of the reach of any possible flood'.[179] Restricted by steep banks, the Murchison could rise 20 to 30 feet when the frequent West Coast rains deluged the area.[180]

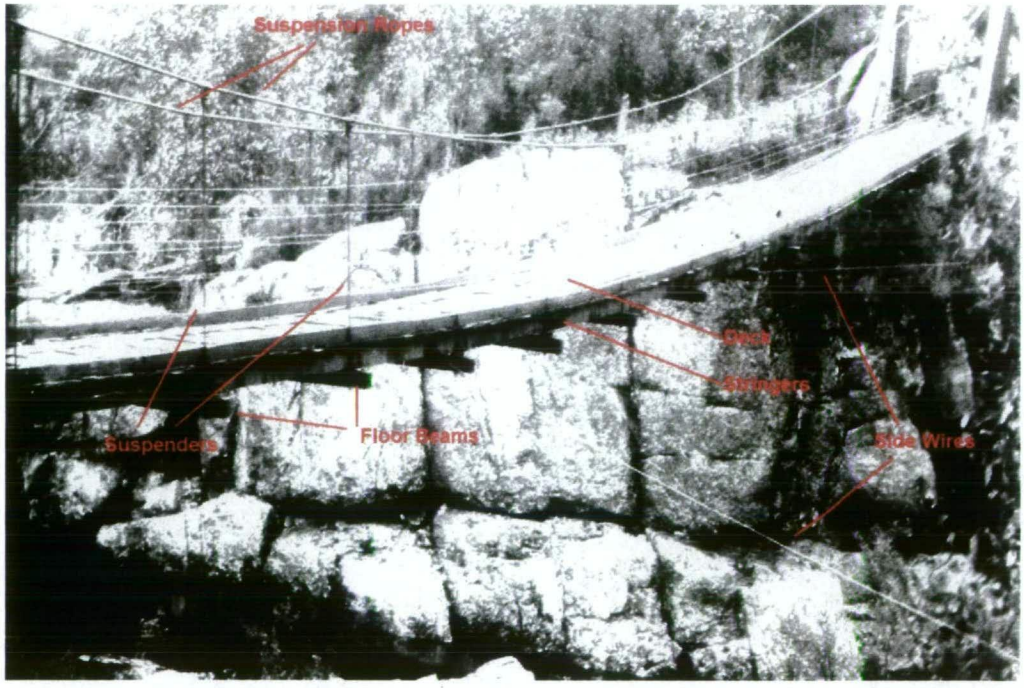

Figure 3-26 Murchison Bridge (Zeehan Mining Museum)

178 "Mole Creek to Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner* , August 6, 1897; Simmons to Parker, January 18, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

179 "Mole Creek to Rosebery" *Launceston Examiner*, August 6, 1897

180 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 23, 1899.

Figure 3-27 Murchison River Suspension Bridge (WH Judd, *Tasmanian Mail*, October 22, 1904)

Building a suspension bridge was a specialist's job beyond the skill of the overseers and Forsyth was employed for the job. Sub-Inspector Read found the best location, which was a little way from Innes' survey line but it halved the span to 130 feet.[181] A good bridge site has solid ground on both banks to secure the critical suspension ropes and support the abutments. The banks are high enough to put the deck above flood level and it should allow even approaches to the bridge.[182] Work stated in late February 1898 and by 15 April some cables, and a

181 "Mining Intelligence - Cutty Sark District", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1898.

182 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route", *Launceston Examiner*, February 23, 1899.

bosun's chair were slung across the river.[183] By early May 1898, the piers and abutments that support the ropes were built onto the solid ground at each bank and the main ropes were in place.[184] Sawyers cut the abutments, braces and decks from trees about 300 feet from the site and these were carried, or probably dragged, to the bridge by the track-cutting gang.[185]

The track was supposed to be built quickly, so the bridge was started before it reached the river. This may have made life easier for the track-cutters but it meant that the main suspension ropes, each weighing 420 pounds, and all the other materials, were carried three miles along the rough survey line 'on men's backs'.[186]

The walking surface of the track was hung from the main ropes.[187] The final jobs were installing the side-wires, which reduced the sway of the bridge, and the four small safety wires, along the side of the bridge.[188] It was completed by 17 May

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183 "Tracks". *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, April 15, 1898.

184 "Mount Farrell District, No.III", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 25, 1900.
Read to Simmons, May 3, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
The abutments supported the two 4 inch main 'stout wire cables' which were 360 feet long. They were wound around the abutments and bolted into the solid rock on both banks.
"Mount Farrell District, No.III", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 25, 1900.

185 Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.
It was probably either stringy bark or celery top pine because this was specified for a suspension bridge over the Pieman River in 1895.
Tender for timber for suspension bridge Pieman River, Folio 13 Page 119, April 20, 1895, *PWD92/1/13, Copies of Notifications of Acceptance to Successful Tenderers for Various Works with Details of Contracts and Payments*, AOT.

186 Read to Packer, January 21, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

187 Every 10 feet floor beams were hung between the two main ropes by wire suspenders. They were then spanned a line of stringers on either side of the floor beams. The deck was then placed across stringers to form the walking surface.

188 "Mount Farrell District, No.III", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 25, 1900.
The top safety wires were four feet above the deck and the others every foot below it 'so there will be no danger of anyone falling overboard.' They were made of fencing wire.
Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
This wire was obtained from the Telegraph Department at Zeehan.
Packer to Secretary Post & Telegraph, March 26, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

1898, after three months.[189] The bridge cost a lot but this didn't guarantee a long life. Within two years it needed repairs, probably due to heavy traffic from the developing Mount Farrell mine.[190]

If the Murchison Bridge was a costly landmark, then the Sophia Bridge was its opposite, unimposing and cheap. It was only 30 feet shorter but it cost just £31. This simple bridge, located on the Sophia Flats, 'a button-grass swamp', didn't receive the same admiration, and frequent photographs, that the Murchison suspension bridge did.[191] Although, both bridges did share a common fate, rot and decay and then submerged under lakes made for hydroelectric power.

The Sophia River bridge was 60 miles from Liena and 6 miles east of Tullah, a short distance above its junction with White Hawk Creek. Sub-Inspector Coleman, who supervised the job, considered it a 'good strong job'.[192] He built it upstream from Innes' survey line to avoid a second crossing at White Hawk Creek. Regardless of where the bridge went, Sophia Flats was a broad tea-tree bog. Simmons noted that the 'whole of the flats for several chains width, show evidence of submergence during winter floods'.[193] When the Sophia River flooded in winter, the waters would spread out rather than becoming an aggressive torrent like the Murchison River. This meant that the bridge needed a

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189 Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
It was reported to be 150 feet long with a width of 6 feet 'between the suspenders'

190 "Mount Farrell District, No.III", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 25, 1900;
Packer to Rule, February 24, 1900, *PWD2*, AOT;
No information could be located about the later life of the bridge but Tullah residents remember only the main suspension ropes remaining before they were submerged by Lake Rosebery.

191 Lord, "A trip to Barn Bluff Mount".

192 Undated sketch plan, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

193 Simmons to Packer, April 24, 1899, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

long approach on the eastern side to avoid the worst of the bog.

The Sophia Bridge was constructed by the western gang in March 1899. It was a 'timber beam bridge', which relies on beams spanning a series of piers or abutments for its strength.[194] In total it was 125 feet long, and made up of four spans. It had a long approach on the eastern side and two piers in the river.[195] The design is quite simple, but one aspect of its support structure incorporated an innovation developed in NSW in 1894. This shows the quick spread of design practice between the colonies.[196] The superstructure of the bridge - the beams, deck and railings - was built onto the tops of the pier and abutments.[197] The overall result was a simple, inexpensive, and robust bridge.

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194 Timber beam bridges are the oldest and simplest form of bridge, the simplest version being a fallen tree trunk across a stream.
Road Traffic Authority, MBK Cardno, "Timber Beam Bridges, Study of Relative Heritage Significance of RTA Controlled Timber Beam Road Bridges in NSW, October 2000", http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/environment/downloads/heritage/bridge-types_historical-overviews_2006-timberbeam.pdf (accessed January 6, 2007).

195 Beginning with the supporting substructure, and from the western side, the western bank was solid and only required a large butt log bedded into the ground to support the start of the first span. The first of the four spans reached the a trestle in the Sophia River which in turn supported the main 43 feet span to the second main trestle. The eastern bank was boggy and required additional support and the long approach that Simmons had suggested. An abutment, a similar structure to the trestles, was sunk into the eastern bank as the eastern end of the third span. One final span continued over the soft ground and its eastern end was supported by butt log bedded in the ground. The two main trestles were 1 ½ foot diameter piles driven into the river bed and held together by two eight by 5 inches cross braces. These two trestles and the eastern abutment were capped with a headstock which transferred the load from the deck to the piles. The headstock consisted of a number of timbers, firstly was pair of beams called capwales bolted to the sides of the piles and then aligned to the direction of the bridge was three large timbers called corbels. This general arrangement, and size of timbers, was consistent with other Tasmania bush-bridges and with PWD bridges in New South Wales.
Tender, Windsor's Bridge over Dalebrook on Higgs Track, February 9, 1922, *PWD 35/1/16 Correspondence and Associated Papers Relating to Construction and Maintenance of Bridges in Municipalities and Generally* AOT;
"Timber Beam Bridges, Study of Relative Heritage Significance of RTA Controlled Timber Beam Road Bridges in NSW".

196 This was the use of paired capwales.
"Timber Beam Bridges, Study of Relative Heritage Significance of RTA Controlled Timber Beam Road Bridges in NSW".

197 The main deck of the Sophia Bridge was three main 16 inch diameter beams which supported decking nine feet wide. The deck was six by four inches by nine foot split timber as planks laid at right angles to the direction of travel on the bridge. The last addition was the fences

However, the Sophia Bridge lasted only 17 years before it was replaced by another, slightly shorter bridge, at the cost of £300. It was considered dangerous because of the condition of the decking and railings.[198] However, repairs, rather than replacement, may have been enough to return it to service. It is normal for Tasmanian timber bridges to need the deck replaced after 10 years, the beams in 20 years and the piles after about 40 years.[199]

The final job on the track was marking the route and installing distance makers and signs. All the original timber stakes and signposts have rotted away, but stone cairns and blazes were also used and some of these have been found:[200] In open country, the route was marked with stakes every 5 chains, which were seen by early walkers.[201] There are no details from the track-cutters, but the marking was probably consistent with that done by Innes' survey gang.[202]

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or rails to stop pedestrians and stock falling from the bridge. This was a kerb along the edge of the bridge and posts to support two rows of handrails.

198 H Simmons, Bridges on the Mole Creek Track, March 23, 1916, *PWD 35/1/10,* AOT.

199 University of Tasmania, Timber Building in Australia, P Yttrup, G. Nolan, 'Performance of Timber Beam Bridges in Tasmania, Australia' http://oak.arch.utas.edu.au/research/beam.asp (accessed January 4, 2007).
Sec Public Works to Secretary for Mines, June 5, 1916, *PWD35/1/10*, AOT.
There had been no consideration to the repair of the old bridge which suggests that the other timbers were also in a poor state. There was not indication that the standard practice of coating the timbers in tar and painting the side rails had been followed which would reduce the working life of the bridge. There was also a considerable cost to improve the swampy approaches to the old bridge. The "rule of thumb" for timber bridges in Tasmania which have service lives of 5, 10, 20 and 40 years for running planks, deck, beams and piles respectively.
H Simmons to Chief Engineer, June 7, 1918, *PWD35/1/10,* AOT.

200 Cairns of stones are very robust and Innes used them 'where stakes are not easily available' but 'a short stout stake firmly planted' in their top. The only cairns located along the route, near Wurragarra Creek, can be ascribed to marking the edge of the Cradle Mountain Reserve. Both Innes and Broomhall's gangs' blazed trees and many are near the track in forest leading to the February Plains. They follow a standard pattern of a large open blaze through the bark about four – six inches round with three horizontal cuts into the heartwood within the blaze. It was a standard practice to blaze many exploration tracks as it was expected that they would not be maintained and regrowth would obscure the position of a track.

201 Broomhall to Packer, April 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;

The Mole Creek Track was completed, albeit in a rush at the end. As a result it was not all built to a high standard. In order to understand the variations in the standard it is necessary to examine the background of the men who built it. This will be task of the next chapter.

The PWD work gangs made of good track. EG Innes had found and marked a viable route for the Mole Creek Track, but the parochial agreements continued. Outwardly the Minister of Lands and Works, Alfred Pillinger tried to appear unbiased, but he played a disruptive role in the face of strident support by Northern Tasmanian business interests. Their lobbying, both through the newspapers and local parliamentarians paid off and the track was made. Unfortunately it became increasing obvious to even its most vocal supporters that the track was unnecessary, at least for them. They never admitted their change of heart, but their actions clearly supported another track to the West.

Examining the archival records and the physical remains of the track brings about a fundamental change in how it should be perceived. This was not a rough bush track winding erratically through forests and steeply up and down hills and mountains. The Mole Creek Track, and other pack tracks, were well designed, well planned and well built. There are more closely related to roads, albeit

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Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.2", *Launceston Examiner* , March 23, 1898;
Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.1", *Launceston Examiner*, March 22, 1898.

202 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 9;
Stakes have been located but they appear to be from the marking of the boundary of the Scenic Reserve and from maintenance conducted in 1939 as part of unemployment relief. Original stakes were located during this maintenance but were almost completely rotted away above ground but in very good condition in the ground.
W Connell, Personal communication, November 19, 1999.

narrower, than they are to bush tracks (and most bushwalkers tracks). The details of the construction reveal layer upon layer of good design and good execution. More than 100 years of little or no maintenance also shows them to be incredibly robust.

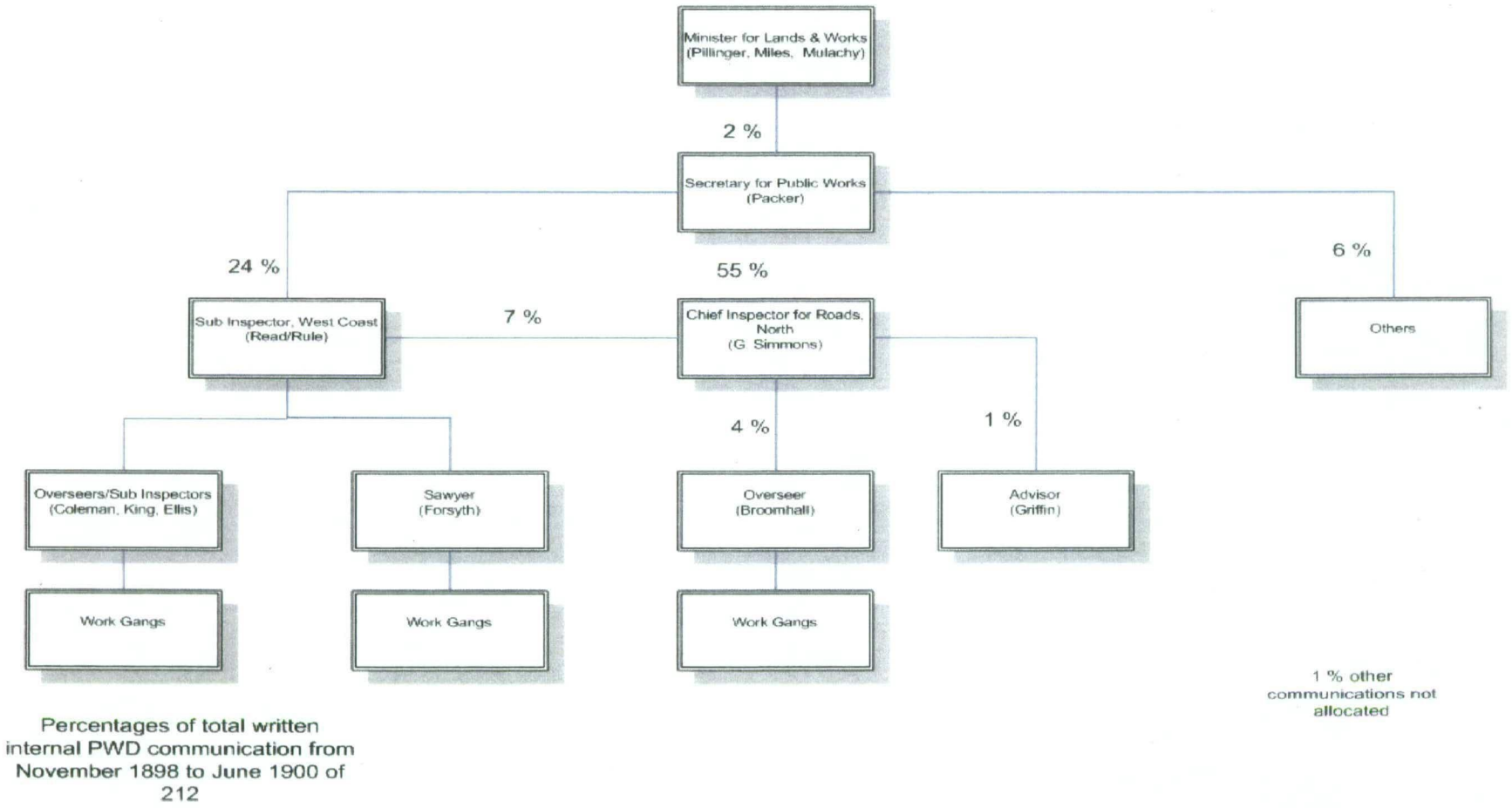

Figure 3-28 Public Works Department Hierarchy for Construction of Mole Creek Track

CHAPTER 4 THE MEN OF THE TRACK CUTTING GANGS

The broad sweeping track that remains for today's bushwalkers and tourists, was "made" by Public Works Department (PWD) labourers led by experienced overseers. These men, from Mole Creek and the West Coast, levelled the ground to form the broad benched track, formed the timber culverts over streams and watercourses and built the bridges. But their work of making the track had been long attributed to the small surveying team under EG Innes. These five men were thought to have done the work of surveying and the work of 50 track-cutters.

The failure of the track-cutters to be recognised provides a good example of the power of the written word over oral traditions. The articulate, and powerful, professionals and businessmen, who visited this country, prepared reports and wrote to the newspapers, whereas the semi-literate farmers of the track gangs didn't and their voices have been largely lost. There was also an element of the romance to exploration by the survey party, which was more interesting than the routine work of track-cutting. The journeys and travails of surveyors like EG Innes were accessible and engaging, but the mundane life of the track-cutters seemed unworthy of inspection. Their stories were not exploration of the unknown and the opening up of new country and knowledge, yet these men worked in the same remote and exposed Tasmanian highlands and endured privations as difficult as any surveyor for much smaller daily pay and for none of the glory. In fact, Surveyor Innes didn't really do any exploration, since he followed existing tracks for much of his journey, improving the route with deviations, just as the overseers that followed him made changes to Innes' route.

As such, there seems to be little to distinguish the skills displayed by the much lauded surveyor and the largely ignored overseers and work teams. The track-cutters on the Mole Creek Track were partially re-instated by Haygarth who recognised their role and rejected the name Innes Track in favour of the title Mole Creek Track.[1] The aim of this chapter is to restore to these anonymous men a voice that has been long lost.

Life Making the Track

The track-cutters woke at dawn each day, just at they did when they lived at home on their farms, except that their home for about three months was a canvas tent, shared with two other men.[2] The PWD provided about ten tents, and canvas flies, to each party, which were pitched together in a protected and level spot near a good supply of water.[3] Life under canvas might seem pleasant, in good weather, with the views of the mountains and plains of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park and a stream running nearby but, even in summer, this was a remote working camp to be enjoyed only briefly at the start and end of a day spent at hard manual work on the track. Sundays was the only day of rest, and strictly observed, but this was still spent repairing worn clothes, boots or tools and washing.[4]

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1 Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle, A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country,* (1998), 75-77.

2 H Packer to G Simmons, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 61 Vic 17 Item 3756 – Track: Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge*, Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT).

3 Ibid.

4 W Duffy to overseers Marlborough to Linda Track, October 4, 1886, *PWD18/1/996 Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 50 Vic 22 Item 1051 -Branch Road: Marlborough to Linda Gold Field, including Bridge,* AOT;

Figure 4-1 Single Tent at Camp Site on Wurragarra Creek, March 1898 [5]

The eastern side of Wurragarra Creek, 22 ½ miles from Liena, was a typical campsite for the track-cutters, placed on level ground just above a small side-creek, and protected from the westerly winds and rains by the high, steep and wooded western rise of the valley. Thick trees on the eastern side of the camp also helped keep wind from the camp. The location, and the view from this point along the line of the track towards Mount Pillinger, hasn't changed since it was occupied by the track-cutters.[6]

A camp would be made more comfortable by extending flies from the tents to make a place to cook, eat or rest outside the confines of the tents. When the rain

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EG Innes, "Route to the West: Report of Mr Surveyor Innes upon the Country between Mount Humboldt and the Head of the Navigable Water upon the Gordon", *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of* Tasmania (JPPP), Report 74 of 1897, (August 25, 1896).

5 "Mole Creek Track, Illustrated Supplement to the Launceston Examiner", *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898.

6 This mountain was named after the Minister for Works and Lands, Alfred Pillinger, during the survey of the railway line to Zeehan in 1890.
Mole Creek to Mount Zeehan Railway Survey, Report of Surveyor in Charge, No.140, *Journals of Legislative Council,* (1891).

and snow became more frequent, canvas flies would also be put over the tents to improve the water proofing, a common practice in this climate.[7] Such a time was early April 1898 when Broomhall reported 'plenty of rain & snow' and the men had only been able to work for two days in the week.[8] There are few descriptions of track-cutters' camps, but Charles Whitham provides one from 1912. The arrangement he described seemed to be commonly used in both Tasmania and New Zealand.

> Practically speaking, they [the track-cutters] enjoy the conveniences of two bedrooms, dining room and kitchen. Two tents, each eight feet by ten, are pitched with the entrances opposite each other, the space between being about ten feet. Over this intervening space, at a height of about twelve feet, a "fire-fly", or tent roof is stretched. Beneath this roof, over and around the fire, there is a staging of spars over which wet clothes can be dried. In the fire place they burn about a ton of wood each night... One can stand upright in these tents, and they are perfectly dry. Close to the main tents is another, which is used as a store house and dining saloon. There is a fifth cover over the forge and bellows.[9]

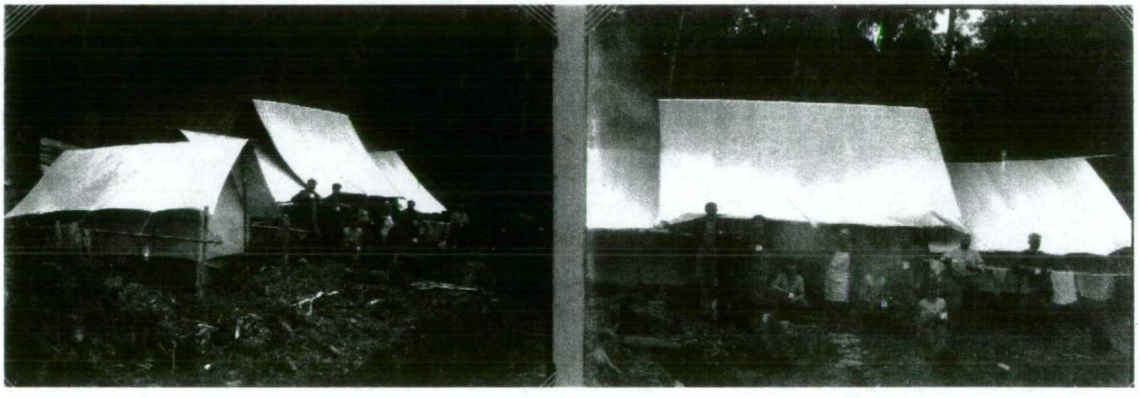

Figure 4.2 – Track Cutters Camp, New Zealand

A camp in the poor weather was at Frog Flats, near the headwaters of the Forth River, and below the eastern face of Mount Pelion West. The position of the campsite was even more important in this kind of weather because the men were confined to their camp for days on end and this site was chosen to gain the most

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7 Geoff Gay, *In the Shadow of Murchison*, (Jay, Smithton, 1993), 7.

8 Broomhall to Simmons, April 9, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

9 Charles Whitham, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, September 2, 1912.

protection from the weather. In better weather, they could have made their camp nearby at the edge of the forest, but instead it was built deep in a forest that had such a thick canopy that it blocked most light, but this provided very good shelter from wind and rain. Here the track-cutters took another step to improve their camp from the extended periods of rain by using long strips of bark to improve the waterproofing of their canvas tents.[10] At this site, at least ten trees show the distinctive signs of bark being stripped.[11] This protected campsite is level and located between two small streams, which again confirms the two key factors for any good camp: shelter and water.

Figure 4-3 Bark Removed from Tree at Frog Flats (Brown 2009)

10 Peter Brown, Survey of 1898 Mole Creek Track Cutters Camp at Frog Flats, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, (April 2001): unpublished report for Parks and Wildlife Service.

11 The scars, each about six feet high and up to 1 ½ feet wide, are still obvious despite some regrowth of the bark at the corners of the cut particularly as the sapwood still clearly shows the cuts of their axes.

The track-cutters rose from their beds to pull on their clothes for the working day to eat breakfast, the first and most important, meal of each day. For the men on the eastern end of the track, this was generally bread soaked in hot milk with a little salt, a typical breakfast for Tasmanian farming families.[12] They may also have had porridge as this was provided for workers on the Linda Track, although there is no direct evidence for it on the Mole Creek Track.[13] In either case, the morning meal would have been accompanied by that ubiquitous beverage, strongly sugared tea.[14]

Breakfast may have been made by the camp cook as it was a common practice of the time to have one person dedicated to this job.[15] There is indirect evidence for a cook on the Linda Track in 1886 as many of the supplies were ingredients which required preparation. These included flour, baking powder, onions, oatmeal, sides of bacon, rice, raisins, currants and castor oil.[16] However, it is possible to argue against a dedicated cook on the Mole Creek Track as the men had to pay for their own rations and would therefore be very careful to husband them carefully, making the logistics for any camp-cook difficult. The supply of flour shows that some baking was done, but damper and 'johnnycakes' were well within the scope

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12 Geoffrey Blainey, *Black Kettle and Full Moon* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 2003), 392;
A Fraser, General Storekeeper and Provision Dealer, List of supplies, June 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

13 Blainey, *Black Kettle and Full Moon*, 231, 240, 367.

14 Ibid.,375, 392;
Fraser, List of supplies, June 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT;
Workers on the Linda Track workers provide some contrast in that coffee, considered a fancy drink at the time, was part of their rations.

15 One example is a PWD team of six men surveying the Derwent Valley Railway in 1913 which, despite being a small group, had one man dedicated to cooking. His job was considered to be important enough to justify being paid 4 pence more a day than his fellow labourers.
PWD232/1/2 Time Books Relating to Various Railway Surveys: Derwent Valley to Tyenna Survey, (1913).

16 Undated list of supplies, *PWD18/1/996*, AOT.

of any bushman.[17] Whitham reported that track cutters on the Crotty Track made their own bread and cakes and these were 'of excellent quality'.[18] It is unlikely that the forward, clearing, camps had a dedicated cook, simply because the two or three men in these camps did not justify it.

A camp cook, if there was one, was more than a matter of convenience or expertise because it allowed the PWD to work the track-cutters for longer if breakfast was ready for them and the evening meal prepared waiting for their return. The length of the working day on the Mole Creek Track, like so many other commonly understood practices, was not specified. Generally, a working day on the West Coast in 1898 was eight hours, but even this caused conflict during the construction of the Linda Track in 1886 with the men, 'a very dissatisfied lot', who expected that their walk between the camp to their work was part of the eight hours of work. The overseer reported that the men 'did not expect to work hard for the government' and complained about 'everybody and every thing'.[19] In this instance, William Duffy, the Engineer for Roads, clearly defined the working hours and they were 'from day light to dusk with one hour intermission for dinner on all days (Sundays excepted)'. Duffy directed that 'no man be kept' if he refused to work those hours.[20]

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17 "Correspondence, Mole Creek Track from Cutty Sark", *Launceston Examiner*, March 19, 1898.

18 Whitham, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, September 2, 1912.

19 G Walsh to W Duffy, April 1, 1886, *PWD18/1/850 Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 49 Vic 44 Item 904 - Tracks: From Marlborough, via Collingwood Valley, to Linda Gold*, (1885), AOT.

20 W Duffy to overseers Marlborough to Linda Track, October 4, 1886, *PWD18/1/996*, AOT

The distance between the camp and the working area of the track would generally have taken the men less than ½ hour to walk. The camps were moved forward as the track progressed, reducing the time lost walking to the job. The average distance from one camp to the next was about two or three miles and the main camp was generally forward of the finished track within the swathe cleared by the small forward, clearing, gang.

Figure 4-4 Track-Cutters Mole Creek Track, March 1898 (S Spurling III, *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898)

The standard working clothes was a three piece suit, hat and solid boots. Although, there appears to be some differences in the clothing shown in the photograph of the eastern work gang, particularly Broomhall's darker suit. This photograph taken in summer shows many of the men still wearing their jackets

which indicates that the weather, particularly at that altitude, could be unseasonably cold and may have prompted the request for 'first class blues', a very solid, and uniquely Tasmanian, bush coat capable of keeping out cold and rain.[21]

Work for the forward, clearing-gang started with burning the forest and scrub to reduce the undergrowth. Fire was also the tool used by the bush-farmers in clearing their blocks and it was also used extensively by prospectors and graziers. It had been used by Innes during the survey and Broomhall had also fired the scrub. Billhooks, a combination of a brush-hook and a light axe, were used to clear the undergrowth. The trees would have been felled to drop away from the line of the track and later burnt to remove them completely. The men's tools of trade were kept sharp with grindstones and the axe handles replaced when they broke.[22]

The main work gang dug the earth, or the rock, to form the six foot wide track. The men used picks and shovels for this work, which gave their names to the nineteenth century term for a labourer, 'a pick and shovel man'. They were also known as navvies on large projects such as railway construction. The photograph of the work gang forming the eastern approach to a small creek clearly shows the men and their tools, picks, short-handled round mouthed shovels, a wheelbarrow

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21 Packer to Simmons, February 26, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT;
Simmons to Packer, February 26, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

22 There is no direct evidence of a forge or blacksmith to re-point for repair heavier tools such as picks but they were common in some of the larger prospecting shows in the area and also on the Crotty Track.

and a dog.[23] Most of the soil would have been thrown by shovel to where it was needed. A road-making text says that a 'good navvy' can throw a shovel full of earth 11 feet vertically or 12 feet horizontally but 'the strain is very severe'. [24] About 10 feet was considered to be the reasonable maximum and it was recommended that movements of between 10 to 20 feet be done as two throws. Beyond this a wheelbarrow was used. At the location shown in the photograph most of the soil was moved about 20 feet to form the abutments for a large culvert.[25] The wheelbarrow would have been used to carry more than soil. Tents and other goods were loaded into them when moving camp. The speed of construction of the track, up to 620 yards per working day illustrates the amount of work that the track-cutters, and other experienced manual labourers of the time, could achieve. A good navvy, making a road, railway line or track, would dig and shovel between 10 to 12 cubic yards of soil per day or 'load, wheel a distance of 50 ft., and dump about 9 cubic yards of average earth per day.' [26] Such work seems superhuman to people of a mechanised era, and it was beyond many people at that time too. On the Linda Track, a much more substantial track, horses were used in the construction work and some died on the job.[27] Two horses were requested from the PWD at the start of work but none were available.[28] An overseer on the Linda Track found it hard to get good 'axeman' but it was more important that they were 'good bushman' otherwise they could not handle the

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23 "Mole Creek Track, Illustrated Supplement to the Launceston Examiner", *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898.

24 JM Coane, HE Coane, JM Coane Jnr, *Australasian Roads, A Treatise on the Location Design, Construction and Maintenance of Roads, Pavements, etc*, (Melbourne: George Robertson & Co, 1915), 90.

25 Ibid., 91.

26 Ibid.

27 Walsh to Duffy, April 1, 1886, *PWD18/1/850*, AOT.

28 Simmons to Packer, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

work.[29] Whitham called the men on the Crotty Track 'skilled tradesmen, expert bushmen'.[30]

The other significant job on the track was making the culverts. The main tools were axes and a good knowledge of timber. All timber was cut with an axe, leaving the characteristic pointed ends on both the culvert timbers and the stumps of the felled trees, which can still be found along the track. All the tools used on the track were at the cost of the PWD and required the authority of the Chief Inspector Simmons to purchase them.[31] Sub-Inspector Read was reprimanded for purchasing tools directly. He also made the mistake of not buying through the Government Stores and spending considerably more on tools, £71, than the gangs on the eastern end, £40.[32] The men were required to care for their tools and it was PWD practice to charge the men for any that were lost or damaged.[33] The repair of tools - re-pointing of picks or repairing damaged shovels - would require the work of a blacksmith but whether they would be done at the camp, as with the Crotty Track, or nearest town is not clear.[34]

There was no lunch for the workers on the Mole Creek Track both because this was not a normal working practice in the bush and the PWD did not allow the break. This made breakfast and the evening meal all the more important. At the end of the day the men returned to camp for the final meal of the day which was

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29 Walsh to Engineer of Roads, undated, *PWD18/1/850*, AOT.

30 Whitham, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, September 2, 1912.

31 Simmons to Packer, January 28, 1898 *PWD18/1/3430*, AOT.

32 Packer to Read, July 28, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

33 Duffy to overseers Marlborough to Linda Track, October 4, 1886, *PWD18/1/996*, AOT.

34 Whitham, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, September 2, 1912.

largely meat, accompanied by sugared black tea and a pipe of tobacco before retiring for the night. Fresh meat from wallaby, wombat and possum probably replaced the tinned, store bought, supplies because it was fresh, had a better flavour and reduced the cost of rations. The bush-farmers were proficient hunters and it was normal practice for prospectors and other people spending time in the bush to catch wildlife to supplement their supplies. Hunting was either by shooting or snaring and may have been aided by the small terrier that accompanied the men in the picture taken in February 1898. Ducks and swans were also present on many lakes.

The cost of food, particularly on the West Coast, was a grievance that was aired publicly by one member of a western gang. The men ordered their food through the PWD which supplied it from the nearest store. The PWD paid the cost of packing the supplies from the store to the camp 'for distances over 12 miles'.[35] Rations at the eastern end were transported by the Chudleigh storeowner, A Fraser, by cart to Liena, arriving there at 7 am every Friday after a three hour journey. Here Fraser met the packers and transferred the supplies to their cart for the journey to the track-cutters' camp.[36] Near the end of construction of the track, rations were being carried over 70 miles to the track-cutters camp, which cost the PWD between 15/- to 25/- per 100 pounds of weight.[37] Some of the packers, such as William Aylett, were paid by the day rather than by weight. He charged 18 shillings and four pence for each day for himself and his horse. As the wage

35 Packer to Read, April 1, 1898, *PWD2*, AOT.

36 "Mole Creek Track to Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner*, February 8, 1898;

37 Simmons to Packer, February 6, 1899, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

for a track-cutter was seven shillings per day, this demonstrates the high cost of feeding a horse in remote country.[38]

At the western end of the track, the men were doubly disadvantaged as they had to pack their own supplies, since they were less than 12 miles from the nearest store, and the supplies were expensive as they had been carried to West Coast and over various railways and tracks to reach their final location. This resulted in a much higher cost for the men on the western end. The price of bread was 1s 4d per loaf and flour 4½d per pound as the western end, whereas the cost at Chudleigh was 3d a loaf and flour 3d a pound.[39]

The men worked in groups of 20 to 40, but an overseer could only effectively manage twenty men at a time.[40] One gang at the western end under Overseer Coleman had grown to about 36 men before it was broken into two because it was 'much too large for one Overseer to work efficiently'.[41] In February 1898, the total work force, eastern end, western end and sawyers at the Murchison Bridge, peaked at about 130 men, but varied greatly depending on the weather. Work continued until the job was completed or the weather disrupted work to such an extent that the men were paying more for their store-bought rations than the wages they earned, and drifted back to their farms or other jobs. Therefore, summer was

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38 Packer to W Tynan, May 13, 1899, *PWD2*, AOT.

39 A Fraser, account for P. Coleman, June 2, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.
"Correspondence, Mole Creek Track from Cutty Sark", *Launceston Examiner*, March 19, 1898.

40 "Track to the West", *Launceston Examiner*, February 16, 1898;
"Cutty Sark District", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1898;
"Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner,* December 14, 1898;
"Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.2", *Launceston Examiner,* March 23, 1898;
"Current Topics, Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, March 2, 1898.

41 Packer to Simmons, February 24, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

the main working season for track-cutting. The first season of work on the western end of the Mole Creek Track started when the Cutty Sark Track began in early October 1897 but stopped about the 16 December 1897 for the Christmas holidays with only 1 ½ miles made.[42] Work resumed, this time on the main part of the Mole Creek Track, on 7 February 1898.[43] By contrast at the eastern end, work started on 4 February 1898 and ceased because of bad weather on 30 April 1898.[44]

The second season of work started in November 1898 and continued until the end of April 1899, except for a brief suspension for Christmas from 22 December 1898 until 11 January 1899.[45] The track parties met in April 1899 and finished construction by the end of that month, when they were disbanded.

Who were the Track-Cutters?

Before the work of Haygarth, all tracks, including this substantial pack track, were believed to have been built by the small survey teams that first found their routes.[46] The archival record of the Mole Creek Track is rich in the details of route-finding by EG Innes, but it contains little of the track-cutters, because they did not, or could not, write of their experiences and the newspapers of the day were not greatly interested in them. At an official level, the PWD, which was

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42 *PWD104/1/8 Journals of Expenditure under Items in Public Works Execution Actions, 60 Vic 45 Item 145,* 88, AOT.
Packer to Read, December 16, 1897, *PWD2*, AOT.
General News, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, February 7, 1898.

44 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, February 5, 1898.
Winter was also the hunting season for furs and skins, another supplement to bush-farmers incomes.

45 General News, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* , January 11, 1899;
"Mole Creek Track, A Junction Effected", *Launceston Examiner*, April 11, 1899.

46 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 75.

responsible for making the tracks, did not retain many of the routine records holding their names and origins. However, the track-cutters did leave a substantial testament to themselves, in the form of the track they cut. This can reveal a lot about them if studied in detail such as in the manner used by Karskens when examining a convict road in New South Wales.[47] Combining this, with their general social background, and a few family histories, it is possible to reconstruct a picture of the men who made the Mole Creek Track.

Of all the men in the work gangs, the clearest image emerges of the overseers. Like the other track-cutters, these men were hired by the PWD as they were needed, paid a daily rate and then dismissed when the job was done. Despite the casual basis on which they were hired the overseers were the sole representatives of the PWD in the remote work camps. They had to execute the Department's wishes, with little direct support from anyone else from the PWD. Their duties were not only supervising the men in the work gangs, but also teaching them how to make the track. And they had to control the costs and speed of construction by making sure that their men were on the job and doing the job that they were paid for, effectively and efficiently. They were also responsible for the supply of tools, tents and food for the men and to make regular progress reports to Chief Inspector Simmons, or Sub-Inspector Read or Rule. The overseers had to drive the work with all the authority that they could muster as a single remote causal employee.

The scope of the overseers' job was broad and it also spread over a huge range of country. They worked miles in front of the small clearing gang to choose and

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47 Grace Karskens, "Defiance, Deference & Diligence, Three Views of Convicts in New South Wales Road Gangs" *Australian Historical Archaeology* 4 (1986): 17 – 28.

mark the best line of the track. The main body of men, situated a few miles behind the clearing gang, also required supervision. To make the overseers' job more complicated, they also had to visit the nearest town to manage the supplies from store-keepers and payment of wages. This might entail a round journey of over 100 miles.

The PWD were well aware of the importance of overseers and one of the first tasks for Simmons and Secretary Packer was to find 'the best overseers' for each end of the track.[48] Simmons immediately chose Henry Coleman for the western end and Richard Broomhall for the eastern end. Broomhall's background was humble. His father had been a convict and he had a received little in the way of education, but he moved beyond his early job as a labourer. By 1895 and at the age of 46 he was a road contractor and was winning PWD tenders, which brought him to the attention of Simmons.[49] Earlier, in 1887, he took shares in the Latrobe Prospecting Association, with many of the leading citizens of Latrobe, including Simmons.[50] Simmons and Broomhall also had other associations, when Broomhall's daughter, Mary, married Simmons's office assistant, Marshall Creswell, in 1895 and Isabella Broomhall, Richard's wife, also worked in Simmons' office at Latrobe.[51] Broomhall was successful, which allowed him to own three properties in Latrobe with a significant total value of £180.[52] He had a family with ten children and some of his sons also became road contractors. After

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48 Simmons to Packer, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

49 Tender, *PWD18/1/2539, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 55 Vic 56 Item 2716 - Branch Road: Railton to Sunnyside,* (1895), AOT.

50 "Memorandum of the Latrobe Prospecting Association Limited", *Mercury*, July 16, 1887.

51 Simmons to Packer, May 11, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

52 Valuation Rolls, *Hobart Gazette*, July 18, 1889.

he finished working on the Mole Creek Track with the PWD, he returned to road contracting and one of his first jobs was making the short-lived Barn Bluff Track. Broomhall continued building roads for the PWD until at least 1918, when he was aged 69 and he often worked with his son, Albert. They also ran a farm at Ridgley.[53] He died in 1933, aged 84, after a long life of hard work and self improvement.[54]

Simmons' confidence in Broomhall's abilities was apparent when he summonsed him to start on the Mole Creek Track 'tonight or first train tomorrow', without consulting anyone else. This appointment was accepted without comment or complaint by Secretary Packer.[55] Simmons allowed Broomhall extraordinary freedom to change the final location of the track without consultation or approval, saying that he was not bound to 'follow Mr Innes' pegs' where he could find a better route. By contrast Simmons did not allow this freedom to the Sub-Inspectors on the western end of the track, Read and Rule, who were permanent PWD employees. He insisted that they get approval for any change from Secretary Packer.[56] Broomhall again got special treatment from Simmons during the winter suspension of work. He directed a Sub-Inspector to hire a traction engine and employ Broomhall as its driver.[57]

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53 Roger Broomhall, personal communication, September 12, 2010.

54 Ibid.

55 Simmons to Broomhall, January 26, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

56 Read to Simmons, May 21, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

57 Packer to Simmons, May 18, 1989, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

HW Coleman, the overseer for the gangs on the western end, was later supported by King and Ellis but only Coleman can be traced.[58] Henry William Coleman was another experienced overseer and, like Broomhall, he had worked as a road contractor before becoming a PWD overseer.[59] His extensive experience overseeing PWD work gangs began in 1896 when he supervised parties of up to 40 men and had 'given great satisfaction' to the department.[60] In 1897, he supervised men building the Zeehan – Dundas road and repairing the Zeehan – Corinna cattle track, and again the department found the work 'thoroughly satisfactory' in both 'quality and quantity'. [61] Indeed Coleman was often moved from one difficult job to another, showing that his skills were highly regarded. In January 1898, he had just started work on a track to Lake Dora when Simmons demanded that he take control of a work party on the Mole Creek Track.[62] Sub-Inspector Read resisted Simmons' request, but he was over-ruled by Secretary Packer. Coleman's good work was rewarded in March 1898 when he was given a full-time PWD position as Sub-Inspector, a promotion which received 'universal acclaim'.[63] The relationship between Coleman and his supervisor, Sub-Inspector – West Coast, changed for the worse when F Read took over the position and there were reports of poor work and the theft of tools.[64] Coleman later returned to

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58 Simmons to Packer, January 27, 1898, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

59 "Tenders Accepted", *Mercury*, November 20, 1891;
"Government Contracts", *Mercury*, August 8, 1892;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, February 17, 1890;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, January 21, 1907;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, February 25, 1907;

60 "Dundas Mining Notes", *Mercury*, August 20, 1896;
"Mount Read Mount Lyell Track", *Mercury*, August 18, 1896.

61 "West Coast Tracks", *Mercury*, March 25, 1897;
"West Coast Tracks", *Mercury*, October 23, 1896.

62 "Zeehan News", *Mercury*, January 29, 1898.

63 "Tasmanian Telegrams, Rosebery", *Mercury*, March 19, 1898

64 Rule to Packer, August 27, 1899, *PWD18/1/3430,* AOT.

being a road contractor, a job that he held with such pride that he had his grave inscribed '50 years a Government Contractor, Overseer and Inspector'.[65]

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Much less is known about the men who these overseers supervised. They were expected to work hard, long hours in poor weather many miles from a comfortable bed and fresh food. These skills were encapsulated in the PWD's advertisement, which called for 'experienced bushmen'.[66] It is difficult to identify individual track-cutters, because they weren't articulate and others who observed their work didn't show any great interest in them. However, the life and general identity of the track-cutters can be pieced together from a variety of sources. The first element of their collective character that emerges is that the men who formed the work parties at each end of the track represented two different societies and came to this work with different expectations. At the eastern end, they came from the farms around Mole Creek, Chudleigh and Caveside and were described by Frederick Prichard of the *Launceston Examiner* as 'strong, sturdy specimens of the Tasmanian bush farmer'.[67] By contrast, those on the West Coast were largely

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Packer to Rule, October 6, 1900, *PWD2*, AOT.

65 "Tenders Accepted", *Mercury*, November 10, 1891;
"Government Contracts", *Mercury*, August 8, 1892;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, February 17, 1890;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, January 21, 1907;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, February 25, 1907;
Archives Office of Tasmania, Index to Wills & Letters of Administration from 1824-1989, AD960/1/64, Coleman, Henry William, [http://digital.statelibrary.tas.gov.au:1801/view/action/nmets.do?DOCCHOICE=AD960-1-64-3303.xml&dvs=1282965604943~441&locale=en_GB&search_terms=&adjacency=&VIEWER_URL=/view/action/nmets.do?&DELIVERY_RULE_ID=4&usePid1=true&usePid2=true] (accessed August 26, 2010)

66 "Government Advertisements", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* February 10, 1898.

67 "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track No.3", *Launceston Examiner*, March 24, 1898.

unsettled young men who had migrated to the area in search of well paid work in the mines or building the Emu Bay Railway.

The bush-farmers working in the eastern gangs were part of a new rural class that had developed in Tasmania over the previous twenty years. European occupation of the land west of Deloraine, including the future towns of Chudleigh, Caveside and Mole Creek, began with the construction of the Van Diemen's Land Company's Road in the 1820s.[68] A few families quickly took much of the best land to form large estates, some of more than 10,000 acres. In the northern districts of Deloraine, Longford, Westbury and Evandale 1.6% of the population had taken control of 67.5% of agricultural land.[69] For the majority of people the only option was to work on these estates as employees, tenants or become independent small landholders. Between the 1850s and 1870s, the Waste Lands Acts attempted to help poorer rural families by making marginal land available at minimal cost. In the Chudleigh area families took up small acreages of forested and hilly country at the fringes of the established estates, such as along the edges of the Western Tiers and around Caveside and Mole Creek. Many families were motivated to take up these bush blocks and work for their own benefit, rather than being tied labour in tenant farming or farm labouring on the large estates.

These pioneering bush-farming families started to form their future farm by building a small hut in the shadow of the tall trees that forested their holding. They then began the back breaking work of clearing the forest, first by burning the

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68 Chris Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania.* (Devonport: Taswegia, 1989): 78.

69 Shayne Breen, *Contested Places, Tasmania's Northern Districts from ancient times to 1900*, (Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies 2001), 40.

scrub and ringbarking the 'giant trees' to prepare them for felling, then they were cut into 'moveable lengths', which were rolled, skidded and dragged into lines by teams of bullocks to become rough fences.[70] Clearing cost between £10 and £12 per acre, many times the original purchase price of tens of acres per pound.[71]

Once the trees were felled and the giant stumps removed, the land had to be ploughed for the first time by a team of four bullocks. Up to this stage the land had produced nothing, absorbing only the farmer's hard labour and money. When Frederick Prichard, the editor of the *Launceston Examiner*, passed through Liena to inspect the Mole Creek Track in 1898, his party was led by Philip Parsons, a bush-farmer himself. As they climbed Gad's Hill on horse back, they saw a selector 'one of those with a heart of iron' trying to clear a few acres. He was felling heavy timber with an axe and Prichard predicted that 'he will be grey headed before he sees the last of those trees'. He called it 'a heart-breaking job'.[72]

By the 1880s, the work of the bush-farmers had transformed the area around Mole Creek and it showed 'every transition in pioneer life' from 'the first hold attack on the primeval' to the established 'beauty of the farmstead of advanced civilisation'.[73] The influx of the bush-farmers expanded the agricultural land and the town of Chudleigh, which until then had served the large estates. It was soon

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70 "Through Tasmania No.18", *Mercury*, December 12, 1883.

71 "Through Tasmania No.17", *Mercury*, December 8, 1883.

72 Prichard, "Westward Ho! The Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, March 22, 1898.

73 Theophilus Jones, "Through Tasmania No.18", *Mercury*, December 12, 1883.

joined by the new towns of Mole Creek and Caveside.[74] The bush-farmers dreamed of self-reliance on their 'general farms' growing and raising whatever gave the best returns, such as grain and fodder, dairy produce and 'a few cattle and sheep'.[75] With land cleared and the soil broken by the plough for the first time, the goal of a good income from a small farm stood before these families, but often the farms were too small, the families too large and the soil not rich enough to reward the hard work of clearing.

There were many examples of where necessity forced these farmers to supplement their income by whatever means was available, such as working on 'roads and on larger farms for cash'.[76] Some, like Bailey, preferred working on the large estates. He received twelve shillings a week, including housing and rations, which he preferred over the eight shillings a day, not including rations, which he had been paid in mines and road contracts.[77] He was able to save as much money at both jobs, but he found life as an employee on the large estate more stable than casual labour where he risked becoming 'a rheumatic old man before he [was] over being a young one' and had also suffered from the 'absence from friends'.[78]

Many small farmers made ends meet through independent means like hunting, prospecting and tourism. Hunting was an important activity, it provided food, and the furs, which were sold to a buoyant market. Prospecting was driven by a

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74 Breen, *Contested Places*, 43.

75 "Through Tasmania No.17", *Mercury*, December 8, 1883.

76 Breen, *Contested Places*, 43.

77 The average weekly wage in the Deloraine area in 1898 was thirteen shillings and six pence, which included rations.
Breen, *Contested Places*, 98.

78 "Through Tasmania No.16", *Mercury*, December 5, 1883.

widely held belief that every piece of unprospected land held untapped riches and this encouraged the farmers to prospect for themselves, or work as guides and packers for others. Discoveries were made in the Pelion, Windermere and Barn Bluff areas and some of these developed into small mines. The other burgeoning interest at the time was natural beauty. This started to take hold in the 1880s and bush farmers saw the potential to attract tourists from the cities via the newly completed railway to the caves, waterfalls, forests and lakes of their area.[79]

William and Arthur Parsons are two of the few bush-farmers who can be identified as working on the Mole Creek Track. They were members of one of the best known of the bush-farming families in the area. Their father, John Parsons, a free settler, and mother Susan, the daughter of a convict, had bought 100 acres of bush land at Western Creek in the 1860s and by the 1880s had made it a 'considerable sort of place', which they worked with their four sons, part of their family of 13.[80] By the 1890s, they were also active in prospecting, guiding to caves, highland fishing, exploration and packing.

Philip Parsons, Arthur and William's older brother, was a well-known prospector with a good knowledge of the region from Gads Hill to the Pelion Plains. He often worked with William Aylett and guided many people including Prichard in 1898 and JW Beattie in 1901. The Parsons sought out places that would appeal to

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79 Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle, A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country,* (1998), 70.

80 Curious Fox Genealogy
[http:''www.curiousfox.com/uk/rsn.lasso?vid+15801&eid+174571&-nothing] (accessed August 27, 2010);
"Through Tasmania No.18", *Mercury*, December 12, 1883;
As the Lobster Flows, (Re-Union Committee for the Re-Union of Caveside and Chudleigh Schools and District, 1994), 75.

the new fashion of nature tourism: waterfalls, lakes, caves, creeks, mountains and grand vistas, and then they put in the tracks that would allow easy access for guided visitors. They cut tracks to Westmoreland Falls, which were near their farm, and also to the lakes on the Central Plateau for the scenery and fishing. In 1895, they stocked some lakes with fingerlings to help start fishing tourism.[81] They provided a fully guided and catered service for the tourists, picking them up from the Chudleigh railway station, feeding and accommodating them and then taking them to the lakes along the tracks that they had cut.[82] The Parsons family association with the area has been recognised by Parsons' Falls and Parson's Track.

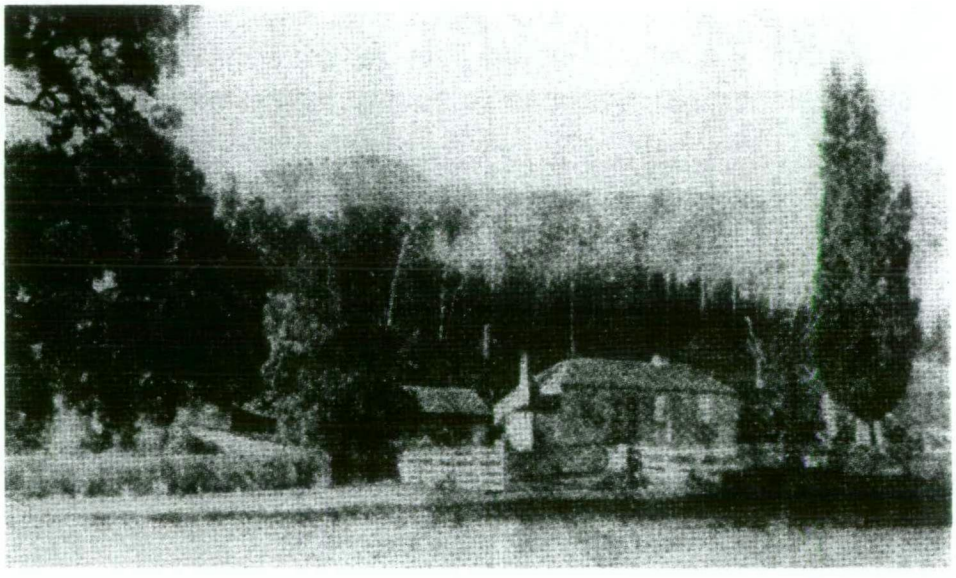

Figure 4-5 Parsons' House at Western Creek[83]

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81 "Westmoreland Falls", *Launceston Examiner*, December 4, 1894.
As the Lobster Flows, (Re-Union Committee for the Re-Union of Caveside and Chudleigh Schools and District, 1994), 58.

82 "Launceston", *Mercury*, October 26, 1897.
"Trip to Lake McKenzie and the Devil's Gullet', *Launceston Examiner*, December 42, 1896.

83 *As the Lobster Flows*, 74.

Another two track-cutters were Jabez Ebenezer Byard and James Byard, of the large Byard family. They too were bush-farmers with a strong entrepreneurial flair. The family migrated to Launceston in 1856 and, after share farming for a few years, purchased a bush block near Caveside for £8 in 1870.[84] They cleared the land and established a farm and within a few years the sons bought their own bush blocks nearby.[85] By 1880, Jabez Byard, the father of Jabez Ebenezer and James, moved from the family farm at Caveside to start his own bush-farm of 56 acres (valued at a total of £7) at Circular Ponds.[86] The family was active in church and local affairs.[87] Jabez Ebenezer Byard and his father supported building the Chudleigh railway line in 1884 and in 1899, at a meeting in Deloraine, they were vocal in support of its extension to the West Coast. This may have been because of their involvement in mines in the Pelion area.[88] Like the Parsons family, they were also active in tourism. James Byard discovered a series of caves of 'wondrous magnitude', which became known as Byards Caves. They actively promoted them, guided tourists and provided refreshments.[89] Like many bush-farming families they were too poor to pay for schooling for their

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84 T Byard, *The Pains & Pleasures of Our Pioneers*, (Launceston: Regal Press, 1990), 8.

85 Ibid., 65.

86 Ibid., 79.
Valuation Rolls, 1898
Archives Office of Tasmania, Colonial Tasmanian Family Links Detail, [http://portal.archives.tas.gove.au/menu.appx?detail=1&type=P&id=41527], (accessed August 3, 2010).

87 AW Stephenson, One Hundred Years – A statement of the development and accomplishments of Churches of Christ in Australia, (Melbourne: Austral Printing and Publishing, n.d.) 'http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/astepheson/ohy/OHY.HTM1946, (accessed September 20, 2010).

88 "Deloraine", *Mercury*, September 13, 1899.
"Railway meeting at Chudleigh", *Mercury*, June 30, 1884.

89 "Byard's Caves", *Examiner*, January 18, 1912.
"Tasmanian Caveland, Interesting discovery near Mole Creek", *Mercury*, November 4, 1891.

children but Jabez Ebenezer, James and their siblings were taught to read by the parents using the Bible as their 'lesson book'.[90]

The only other local track-cutters that could be identified were James Sheen and James Clarke, who were both bush-farmers. Sheen lived at Western Creek, near the Parsons family and married Elizabeth Parsons to produce a large family.[91] Clarke, on the other hand, was from Mole Creek. Possibly as a result of his experience on the Mole Creek Track, he later became a road contractor.[92]

Among the track-cutters at the eastern end, David Cinnamon was unusual in not being a local resident. He came from Latrobe and was probably recruited directly by Richard Broomhall, who also lived at Latrobe. Soon after working on the Mole Creek Track he became an engine driver at Beaconsfield, a skilled occupation.[93] Two of Richard Broomhall's sons also worked on the track. One was Albert Tasman Broomhall who continued to work both with his father, and for himself, as a road contractor, but the identity of the other Broomhall is not known.[94] Albert was a strong sportsman and competed in cycling, hurdles and football.[95]

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90 Byard, The *Pains & Pleasures of Our Pioneers*, 222.

91 Archives Office of Tasmania, Colonial Tasmanian Family Links Detail, Parsons, John Francis, http://portal.archives.tas.gov.au (accessed August 3, 2010);
Archives Office of Tasmania, Colonial Tasmanian Family Links Detail, Sheen, James, http://portal.archives.tas.gov.au (accessed May 31, 2008).

92 Roots Wed, Mole Creek Area, Post Office Directory, c 1921-22, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~austas/molecreekPO.htm (accessed September 21, 2009).

93 Electoral Roll, State Tasmania, Division Wilmot, Subdivision Beaconsfield, 1903, Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies, Inc.

94 "Public Works Tenders Accepted", *Mercury*, April, 25, 1927;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, May, 18, 1908;
"Public Works Tenders", *Mercury*, June 4, 1906.

95 Roger Broomhall, personal communication, September 12, 2010.

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The track-cutters working on the western end of the track had a very different background. The West Coast was booming again after the near collapse of mining in the depression of 1891 and the slow recovery that followed. As the older mines expanded, new mines were developed, and towns, railway lines and ports were built. In the ten years after 1891 the population of the West Coast increased from 7,000 to 18,937 people.[96] While the population in the main towns, Zeehan and Queenstown, swelled, the boom extended into the forested mountains and valleys, where new mines, camps and towns sprang up. Rosebery, the town at the western end of the Mole Creek Track, was only a few years old and joined other small young towns such as Mount Farrell (later Tullah), Mount Read, Deep Lead (later Williamsford), Ringville and Brookeville on Pieman River. Even outlying areas had substantial populations. The Cutty Sark area had 150 men, Rosebery was home to 200 men and similar numbers worked in other new prospects that were household names in their day but are now largely forgotten.[97] The Emu Bay Railway (EBR) was being built south towards Rosebery and Zeehan. It employed a large mobile population of men for the hard physical labour of clearing and excavating.

The railway labourers worked out of the camps that moved south with the progress of the EBR. In early 1898, 400 men were working on railway and 'the cry is still they come', to take up the hard manual work of hewing the railway

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96 Charles Whitham, *Western Tasmania, A Land of Riches and Beauty.* (Queenstown: Board of Management: Robert Sticht Memorial Library, 1949): 55.

97 "Overland from Emu Bay", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, April 4, 1898.

through the forests, mountains, valleys and rivers. The railways had a strong appetite for experienced labourers, called navvies in railway work, but those not fit for the job, called 'duffers', had no chance of work.[98] By late 1898, the workers had increased to about 1,000 men and another 400 arrived from Melbourne in one three week period in July 1898.[99] The good wages even attracted some tenant farmers from Deloraine.[100]

This was the labour market on the West Coast and the pool from which the workers on the Mole Creek Track were drawn. The track cutters were close neighbours to the navvies on the EBR and the diggers in the nearby mines. This was a problem for Sub-Inspector Read, because these other jobs were better paid and more reliable. The result was that the PWD advertisement for 'good bushmen' was answered only by those who could not find work in the mines or on the railway. The low pay and the prospect of living in a small remote camp far removed from the bigger and better serviced towns of the West Coast was hardly appealing.

The daily pay for jobs on the West Coast was much higher than other parts of Tasmania and other colonies. On its own, this is a false comparison for two reasons, the high cost of living on the West Coast and the days, and consequently wages, lost when the men couldn't work due to bad weather. The cost of food and equipment was much higher than the rest of Tasmania (the very problem that the Mole Creek Track and the EBR were supposed to solve) because it was remote

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98 "The Emu Bay Railway", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, November 17, 1898.

99 "Emu Bay Railway Company", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, August 4, 1898.

100 "Country News, Deloraine", *Mercury*, April 1, 1898.

and everything had to be carried from Hobart, Launceston or Melbourne to the towns, mines and camps. The best pay rate was in the mines, even 'surface men' received nine shillings a day, underground got 10s and this would increase to 11s in a wet shaft or drive. Tradesmen; carpenters and blacksmiths; received 12 shillings a day.[101] Working under shelter, be it a mine or a building, had the advantage of being protected from bad weather and they consistently worked and were paid for six days of each week.

Railway work paid well too, but not as well as the mines, and bad weather could stop work, especially during winter. The typical wage for a railway construction worker was between seven and eight shillings per day, depending on the skills of the individual.[102] The PWD paid track-cutters on both the eastern and western ends of the Mole Creek Track made between six and seven shillings per day (before the deduction for rations).[103] FC Brookes, manager of the Cutty Sark mine, observed that track-cutters 'soon clear off when they got a job' in the mines.[104]

The potential working week was six days, but the men were only paid for each day worked and any interruption meant lower weekly pay. The men on the Mole Creek Track, like other outdoors workers, often lost working days due to bad weather. It was normal to get only four days each week, and even the working

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101 "Letters to the Editor", *Mercury*, April 21, 1892.

102 In 1896, when the government constructed the North-East Dundas Tramway they paid seven shillings a day and, in 1898, the EBR paid up to eight shillings a day, which had been the wage on the 1890 Zeehan to Strahan Railway.
"Along the West Coast", *Mercury*, May 28, 1890;
"Notes from Brookeville", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, October 13, 1898.

103 "Small Wages", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, March 31, 1898.

104 "Rosebery-Cutty Sark Track, An Excellent Job", *Launceston Examiner*, November 11, 1897.

days could be very unpleasant due to rain, wind and snow.[105] There was also the discomfort of living under canvas in remote bush camps away from the community and services of the rowdy bush-towns.

The general dissatisfaction with work on the Mole Creek Track surfaced within two months of work starting. The first complaint was in March 1898, when "Roadman" wrote to the *Launceston Examiner* 'from the banks of the Murchison' saying that the men were 'not getting enough to keep body and soul together'.[106] A month later, one gang had reportedly quit 'being dissatisfied with the rate of wages paid'.[107] 'Many and bitter complaints' continued in May about 'the starvation wages' and increased until it was difficult to keep 'a decent staff of men on the work'.[108] There were no written complaints at the eastern end, but some must have felt dissatisfied in November 1898 when only two of 16 days could be worked due to bad weather. The men earned 'very little more than "tucker"'.[109]

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Turning from the archival record, more can be discovered about the men who made the track through field work. At first sight, the characteristics of the track paint a confusing picture because they vary so much along its length. In some places it is benched deeply into the sides of mountains and in others, largely on the open plains, it is not made at all, just marked by stakes. The grade of the track

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105 "West Coast Matters", *Mercury*, November 17, 1896.
106 "Small Wages", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, March 31, 1898.
107 "Tracks", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, April 16, 1898.
108 "Pieman Notes", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 5, 1898.
109 "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, December 14, 1898.

also varies. Most of it has quite gentle grades, but it does have some very steep sections. The starkest contrast is on the northern flank of Mount Swallow where it suddenly turns from a well formed benched track into an unformed path. This marks where the gangs working from each end of the track met in April 1899.

The standard of the track starts to make sense when a technique, developed by Karskens, is applied. The construction standard of the track is considered in relation to the gangs that made the different sections and, in this case, the season when the work was done.[110] Table 4.1 summarises the quantifiable aspects of construction of the track by the two different gangs for each work season.[111] Grade was calculated from the accurately measured location of the track and change in height as given by modern 1:25,000 topographical maps. The progressive construction costs for both ends of the track were estimated from PWD reports of expenditure found in their files and reported in the newspapers. Sometimes the cost for Broomhall's eastern end was given individually, which has allowed the cost for both ends to be estimated. The number of men working could be estimated as wages were about 95% of the total cost of the track

The work seasons were mainly summer and early autumn when the weather was more stable and less prone to the bad weather that would stop work, and ultimately drive the men from the job. Although, a small gang at the western end was able to work through much of the winter of 1898 because they were protected

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110 G Karskens, "Defiance, Deference & Diligence, Three Views of Convicts in New South Wales Road Gangs" *Australian Historical Archaeology* 4 (1986): 17 – 28;

111 The table gives an assessment of the standard of the track based on recent field work and comments by walkers who travelled its route shortly after it was constructed. Construction of the Murchison suspension bridge and the Sophia River bridge has not been included, to allow the cost of the track-work at the two ends to be compared directly.

by the forests and the valley of the Pieman River. In the first season, from February to April 1898, Broomhall, and the eastern gang, made a good pack track between Gads Hill and Mount Pelion West. They made it to the width specified by the PWD, with generally gentle grades and, for the most part, it was well formed. Bushwalkers today find those parts of the Arm River and Overland Tracks well made and an easy grade despite more than 100 years of wear and erosion. However, Government Geologist Waller and photographer Beattie in 1901 complained about the soft boggy ground across the February Plains.[112] Broomhall and his gang of about 18 men moved very quickly and effectively, making on average about 620 yards of new track each day. Their work was made easier by the judicious use of existing tracks and open plains. Benching, the hardest work, made up for about 30% of the distance: on the rise up to and down from the February Plains and through the Forth River gorge and up on Mount Pelion West. In mid April 1898, work stopped because the weather had broken and they were only able to work a few days each week. With the creeks and rivers flooded and good pay impossible, the men drifted back to their farms and Broomhall accepted the need to disband the gangs for winter.

At the western end, starting at the Cutty Sark Track, Overseers Coleman and King and their two gangs made five miles of very good track through thick forest. On the other hand, the eastern gang made 29 miles through more than six miles of thick forest and made about ten miles of benching. The track made by the western gangs was well graded and the benched into the side of Mount Black. Initially

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[112] G Waller, Report on the Mineral Districts of Bell Mount, Dove River, Five-Mile Rise, Mount Pelion and Barn Bluff Secretary for Mines Report, *JPPP*, No 4 (1901): 66:
John Watt Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", *Proceedings and Papers of Royal Society of Tasmania,* (September 9, 1901):

Coleman and King had 40 men and they were able to extend the working season for much longer than the eastern gang, first by keeping one gang working after the winter weather started and then by retaining two resilient men into the depths of winter.

Work resumed for the next season in November 1898 and continued until April 1899, with a short break for Christmas. At first, Broomhall, and his eastern gangs, made a good track. In early 1899, they reached Granite Tor, where Griffin's new route along the Brougham River valley replaced Innes' survey. By then, it was clear that the budget was running out and there was still about 15 miles of country to cross, along a new survey line that wasn't finalised. The track from Granite Tor to the final meeting point reflects Broomhall's decision that 'a rough track was better than no track'.[113] And it was very rough and steep. The grade down the western side of Granite Tor is 1 in 5, twice as steep as the accepted maximum for PWD pack tracks. And the last rushed three miles before the meeting point were barely made at all. The contrast is stark where Broomhall's rough mountain path finally joins with Coleman's graded pack track at Mount Swallow. In the second season, Broomhall had swapped quality for quantity. He had a smaller gang than in the first season, but made a similar amount of track, through similar terrain, for about the same cost as the first season. This was notable considering the much higher cost of packing the men's supplies due to the much longer distance.

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113 "Westward Ho! Mole Creek to Rosebery, The Through Route, Some Observations", *Launceston Examiner*, February 24, 1899.

At the western end, the gangs had continued to make a good track, in fact too good. Contrary to the scope of work, it was good enough for a dray (a horse drawn cart) rather than a pack track for pack horses and pedestrians. Most of their work had been through forests with the exception of open plains around the future township of Tullah. When the money was running out, the western gangs were about three miles from the final meeting point and the eastern gang had about ten miles to make. The western gangs made the track steeper and narrower. They also made it more quickly, although this was solely due to a larger workforce. However, for all their efforts the cost for each mile, was much the same as in the first season.

	East (Broomhall)		West (Coleman/King/Ellis)	
	First Season	**Second Season**	**First Season[1]**	**Second Season**
Standard	Pack Track (6')	Bush Track	Dray	Dray (5')
Maximum Grade	1 in 8	1 in 5	1 in 12	1 in 6
Miles Made	29	25	5	10
Cost (£)[2]	500	600	420	830
Working Days[3]	81	141	185	135
Cost (£/mile)	17	24	87	85
Speed (yards/working day)	620	320	50	130
Spend (£/working day)	6	4	2	6
Average Number of Men Employed	18	12	6	18

1 – Season extended by small gang working through winter

2 – Excludes cost of bridges made on western end of track

3 – Assumes six working days per week

Table 4-1 Comparison of Construction Standards

The physical evidence, how well the track was built, and the statistics, reveal four distinct standards of track. At the eastern end, Broomhall and his gang made a good pack track, quickly through generally open country during the first season. Even at the start of the second season, the track that Broomhall and his gang made was still to a high standard and efficiently made. With the money running out, and the two groups of workers still separated by 15 miles of forested and mountainous country, Broomhall made a decision to make a substandard track.

By comparison, the overseers at the western end, Coleman, King and Ellis, made an expensive dray track and made little effort to husband the funds. The track that their gangs built was four to five times more expensive per mile than Broomhall's. And they made three to ten times less progress each working day. The outcomes of the two groups are distinct and the reasons for this can be traced to their backgrounds.

The characters of the men in the gangs on the eastern and western ends of the Mole Creek Track could be summarised as a diligent overseer with a gang of hard-working and compliant men at the eastern end, and, at the western end, gangs of unmotivated men working for overseers who could not get the best workforce. At the western end, the normal difficulties of effective control of work gangs in remote areas, was made worse by ineffective support from their immediate supervisor, Sub-Inspector F Read, and later the recently promoted F Rule, and Chief Inspector Simmons' inability to supervise these West Coast Sub-Inspectors. But there is nothing to suggest that Overseers Coleman, King and Ellis were not good overseers. Coleman was well regarded and continued as a

road contractor for many years after completion of the Mole Creek Track. However, the authority of a lone supervisor, in a remote location, is tenuous and their authority was stretched when they have a large gang of men who consider track-cutting as a last resort and have an eye to move on quickly to the railways or mines. These gangs worked slowly, never getting more than a half day's walk from the nearest towns and hotels of Brookeville and Rosebery.

Beside the reluctance of his workers, Coleman's job as overseer was made all the more difficult by first of all having a work gang of 40 men, which was considered to be too large to effectively manage. He was promoted to take on other duties, which still included trying to oversee his gang on the Mole Creek Track. The other overseers, King and Ellis, were brought in to assist Coleman when he was stretched. There must be some question about the abilities of Sub-Inspectors Read and Rule to support the overseers. While Chief Inspector Simmons allowed Broomhall complete freedom to change the route of the track as he saw fit, he required Read to get formal approval from the Secretary of Works, which indicates a lack of trust in his judgement. Read was also taken to task by Secretary Packer for over-spending on tools for the workers on the track, and buying them without appropriate authority. Simmons couldn't effectively control the performance of the western end, despite his departmental authority over the West Coast Sub-Inspectors, because they choose not to accept his authority. Read frequently communicated directly with Secretary Packer and did not comply with Simmons' requests unless they were supported by Packer.

As outlined earlier in the chapter, the eastern gang was made up of bush-farmers from the Mole Creek area who were used to long hours of hard outdoors labour. It was only the poor income from the small farms, which they had cut from the forest that drove them to find work elsewhere. The alternatives were seasonal farm-labouring on the large estates of the area or government work, such as the Mole Creek Track. The tough and motivated workers of the eastern gang were made more effective by the character of their overseer, Richard Broomhall. He considered not just the quality of the track, the output of his workers, but also the budget. His decisions consistently demonstrated his abilities as a supervisor and administrator. He changed the route of the track for many miles, either to avoid rocky ground or to reduce the length of the track, with the aim of reducing costs. His boldest decision was at Granite Tor, where he showed flexibility by balancing the poor quality of the track that he cut with the need to complete it. He made this decision because of the much poorer performance of the western gangs.

In May 1899, the Mole Creek Track was completed with an over-run of £85, out of a budget of £3,000. The fact that it was completed at all was largely due to Richard Broomhall's decisions and the hard work of his track-cutters. Even before the track was completed it was in heavy use, but its completion marked the time to see if it did all that has been promised by Prichard and the NWDRA.

The life of a track cutter was difficult, as difficult as that of EG Innes and his survey party when they marked the track. However, life could be made bearable in the canvas camps of work gangs. Food was supplied every week and freshly cooked. It was a hard life, but for the bush farmers that made up the work gangs

at the eastern end it was little different to their normal work days. These were hardy men used to hard work with an axe or shovel and to working in difficult weather. They performed with little complaint.

The western end was very different. They were itinerant workers attracted to high paying jobs in the mines, or at least on the EBR. High wages, but the high cost of living on the West Coast ate into those high wages. If they couldn't get work in the mines or on the railway, the poor alternative was track cutting. It paid less and the bad weather (were they ready for that?) made working hard and often made it too difficult to work. Less days worked meant less pay. These men, ill prepared and disgruntled from the start could only rub shoulders with their better paid colleagues in the bush towns. They complained, and they left when better work was available or the hardships of the bush drove them away.

The standard of the track, and the speed that it was made at, demonstrates not only the difference between the men, but the flexibility of their overseers. Richard Broomhall made well when he could and made rough when the money was running out. And why was it running out? It was squandered by the western gangs in slow work, expensive work and the monument to cost over-runs, the Murchison River suspension bridge.

CHAPTER 5 THE SUCCESS OF THE TRACK

The North and West Direct Route Association (NWDRA) made many bold claims about the Mole Creek Track, as did southern Tasmanian interests for the tracks that they supported. And like the related agitation for railways, history (or its silence) has been damning about usefulness of the tracks. The southern track, the Tyenna – Gordon Track, never received more than a few visitors. The Mole Creek Track lays long overgrown. Only the Linda Track, the other significant track from central to western Tasmania, is an obvious success. It grew into a stock route, telegraph line and finally its success destroyed it when it became the route of the Lyell Highway. What did the Mole Creek Track achieve?

The NWDRA and Frederick Prichard at the *Launceston Examiner* had set high expectations for the Mole Creek Track. But their interest waned even before it was completed in April 1899, which did not bode well. They had said they wanted a direct route to link Northern Tasmania with the West Coast, and they got that, the problem was that hardly anyone cared, and few people had made the trip from Liena to Rosebery. It was also supposed to foster trade, but no stock was driven through to feed the hungry miners. Among the many myths that have grown up around the Mole Creek Track are some that say that it was a popular direct route. Cattle and sheep are said to have been sent through, but there has been no primary evidence to support this, with considerable circumstantial evidence that they did not.[1] There are also stories of foot-traffic, because it was

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1 Lambert had researched his, unreferenced, article from the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, but no contemporary references to cattle or sheep coming over the Mole Creek Track can be found. Others, specifically Jetson in his work on cattle droving from the North-West and his PhD and Haygarth's work, make no mention of this. There are references to cattle coming from the

an affordable alternative, as Lambert states, 'for those miners too poor to afford the steamer of the incomplete Emu Bay Railway'.[2] He reports workers visited their families at Mole Creek when the Argent Tunnel was being made in 1899-1900.[3] It had become a failure as a direct route and there were two powerful reasons. The Emu Bay Railway (EBR) now linked the West Coast, albeit indirectly, to Launceston. And, in the middle of 1898, the mining boom at Rosebery crashed, because its rich copper ore was poisoned with zinc.[4] The track was also a failure for the prospectors and local shop-keepers around Mole Creek. There may have been only the occasional person walking the track from end to end, but traffic along parts of the track was much more significant.

Traffic flourished for a while along some of the track's western reaches, serving a mine here, a prospector there and even the EBR, for a while. The track had also opened up the prospects around Barn Bluff and Lake Windermere, previously the exclusive domain of Mole Creek men, to the keener prospectors of the West Coast. Some, like William Aylett simply moved west to Tullah.

'north' and cattle coming 'overland' in the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* and the *Examiner*, but they refer to the North –West. Reference were found to cattle and sheep driven on the Linda Track, which included stock driven from the north, probably past the Great Lake from Deloraine, even though the Mole Creek Track was open. Once open, the Emu Bay Railway transported stock, which the Launceston Examiner supported and reported that 'our stock owners are utilising the railway'.
Geoff Lambert, "Innes Track", *Tasmania Tramp*, 22 (1976): 54-64;
Tim Jetson, *It's a Different Country Down There, A History of Droving in Western Tasmania*, (Circular Head Bicentenary Project Team, 2004);
Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle, A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, (1998);
Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, May 30, 1898;
"Police Protection to Stockowners", *Mercury*, January 25, 1902;
"The West Coast", *Mercury*, February 26, 1902;
Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 10, 1899.

2 Lambert, "Innes Track", 59.
No references have been found to support these comments but the cost of travel from Launceston to Zeehan £2 1s 6d, second class return, many days wages for most workers.
"Excursions to West Coast", *Examiner*, March 22, 1902.

3 Lambert, "Innes Track", 60.

4 Loftus-Hills, "The zinc-lead sulphide deposits of the Read-Rosebery district. Part 2, Rosebery group", *Geological Survey Bulletin No.23*, Department of Mines, Tasmania, (1915): 96.

Early in 1898, the nemesis of the Mole Creek Track, the EBR, put the section of track from Rosebery to the Pieman River to a severe test. This section, made as the Cutty Sark Track, was not originally part of the Mole Creek Track until Alfred Pillinger, the Minister of Lands and Work, decided to incorporate it, mainly to relieve himself from intense pressure over his delays of starting of the Mole Creek Track. It did shorten Innes' route by about three miles and mean more money for the rest of the Mole Creek Track, but it was steep.[5] The hundreds of workers making the railway moved south towards Zeehan, and when they reached the Pieman River, they threw up a small town and called it Brookeville after the manager of the Cutty Sark mine. This small canvas town had a few substantial buildings, including a hotel, and was the home for men clearing the forest, making the railway formation and building the substantial railway bridge over the Pieman River.

Figure 5-1 Pieman Bridge and Brookeville (Rae, *A Window on Rosebery*, 31)

5 Ibid.

The EBR Company asked to carry their supplies over the track with the understanding that the company would 'make good all damage done'.[6] They packed and dragged 'hundreds of tons of tucker and railway material' from Rosebery over the western spurs of Mount Black.[7] The heavier loads that could not be carried by horses, such as barrels of cement, were dragged on a sledge. Within a month the track was impassable to pack-horses and the local community demanded that it should be reinforced with corduroy, at the expense of the PWD.[8] In the end, the Government paid a small contribution to lay corduroy on the worst sections.[9] Despite the repairs, complaints continued from mid 1898 until the Pieman River railway bridge was completed in June 1899.[10] The heavy traffic stopped and the track, between Rosebery and the Pieman River, was only used sporadically. The few men who continued to use it were largely silent. They were prospectors, hunters, tourists and timber getters, who said little for public attention. But, from time to time they could be vocal, not to make idle comment, but to call for some practical action such as in 1900 to repair the track near the Pieman River.[11]

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6 Secretary Packer to J Stirling, Emu Bay Railway, March 17, 1898, *PWD 2 Letterbooks of general outwards correspondence*, Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT).

7 "Notes from Brookeville", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, October 13, 1898.

8 Sub Inspector Read to Chief Inspector Simmons April 14, 1898, PWD 18/*1/3430, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 61 Vic 17 Item 3756 – Track: Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge,* AOT;
"West Coast Mining, Cutty Sark Locality", *Launceston Examiner*, March 21, 1898.
Secretary Packer to Sub-Inspector Read, April 20, 1898, *PWD 2,* AOT.

9 Engineer-in-Charge EBR to Minister of Lands, April 25, 1898, *PWD 18/1/340*, AOT;
"Pieman Notes", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 5, 1898.

10 Secretary Packer to Montagu Road Trust, June 17, 1898, *PWD 2*, AOT;
Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* August 19, 1898;
"Deep Lead Pieman Track", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* November 15, 1898.

11 JW Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount", *Tasmanian Mail,* April 28, 1900;
Lou Rae, *The Emu Bay Railway, VDL Company to Pasminco*, (Sandy Bay: Lou Rae, 1991): 101.

The hey-day of this part of the Mole Creek Track was over. In the 1920s timber-getters working on Mount Black used it, for a while, to drag their logs out. [12] Today, the Cutty Sark Track is very clear, in places, despite decades of regrowth, the activities of bulldozers and modern mineral exploration.

* * *

To the east of Brookeville, Mount Farrell's mines also relied briefly on the Mole Creek Track to access the EBR at the Pieman River. These mines at Tullah owed everything to the track. One of the basic tenets of making tracks in mineral bearing country was that they would bring discoveries and wealth. Too often they did not. But the Mole Creek Track at Mount Farrell was an exception. And the track served the mine as it developed and showed an ever expanding appetite for transport, for ore to market and for supplies to the mine and the miners.

By 1900 it was clear that the mine was a success, rather than the usual story of high expectations followed by failure. Given the relentless opposition of the Southern press to the Mole Creek Track, it was time to crow about this small triumph. An editorial praised the track, and the mine, saying that there was

> no stronger incentive for the construction of tracks than that of the Mole Creek Track, which was so persistently urged in these columns, and which has given such a great return to the Treasury through the opening up of the Farrell district[13]

This should have been Prichard taking credit for the track he lauded for years in the *Launceston Examiner*, but instead the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* claimed the

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[12] Overseer Hardstaff to Secretary for Public Works, June 14, 1920, *PWD 24/1/18 Correspondence and associated papers relating to construction and development of tracks, including tourist tracks, generally and in municipalities - Zeehan*, AOT;
The remains of a wooden railway along some of the track show that they found a solution to this problem.

[13] "The Mount Farrell District", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 23, 1900.

mine and the track, as its own. And it was their's now, the traffic on the track was all at the western end and the North saw little come their way along what had been their track.

The Mount Farrell mines are also a perfect example of the changing demands for transport as a discovery develops into an operating mine. This same process was seen again and again at West Coast mines, but all too often it stalled and died when the mine failed to live up to the promoters great dreams. The life of the Mount Farrell mines started on Sunday morning, 7 February 1897, when Josiah Innes and William Aylett returned from scouting a route for the Mole Creek Track between Granite Creek to Rosebery, as part of EG Innes' survey. Josiah Innes, the survey party leader's brother, and Aylett found a rich gossan outcrop 'on the Western Fall of Mt. Farrell'.[14] They had also seen signs of minerals at Granite Creek. They finished work on the track survey in late May, but winter weather kept Josiah Innes and Aylett away from their finds until early September, when they returned to the area, prospecting as they went.[15]

First they spent time at the Fury River and then blasted opened the lode at Granite Creek. It was rich enough for them to claim mineral leases here. Even so, they moved on to Mount Farrell on 12 October and began prospecting there. They prospected the area for five days until Innes was convinced that 'we are upon a very large valuable body of load [sic] formation'. But other prospectors were only 1 ½ miles away, so he decided not to alert them by using explosives but to

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14 Josiah Innes, November 13, 1928, reported by Edward DB Innes, December 14, 1947, Community History, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery.

15 EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)*, Vol. 37, Paper 43, August 3, 1897; Josiah Innes, Diary 1897, R1149, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

immediately claim the area.[16] They pegged the mineral leases in the names of Josiah Innes, William Innes (another of Josiah's brothers), and JF Foley (a Launceston businessman). Aylett and Innes had made the discovery together, and the tested it together, but Aylett disappears from the history of the Mount Farrell mines as later told by Innes. The leases that he did share with Josiah Innes at Granite Creek were useless. Aylett continued his association with this area, guiding and prospecting along the Mole Creek Track for many years, but without ever making another substantial discovery.

The role of the Mole Creek Track in the discovery at Mount Farrell was just as it was supposed to be. It was an article of faith, in both the North and the South, that access to unexplored metalliferous regions of the West Coast brought discoveries.[17] Prospectors would fan out from these arteries of exploration into the bush to examine every creek and every rock. The track only needed to be cheap and rough. A bush track, and the survey of the Mole Creek Track that Innes and Aylett followed, was a rough bush-track, albeit very well graded. Such bush tracks were good enough for a prospector carrying his swag, but that was their limit.

Innes returned to his deposit in February 1898 to begin the uncertain period of testing by driving an adit into the lode.[18] For this he needed money to pay for men and equipment. Innes had little, so he offered the men shares if they worked

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16 Josiah Innes, Diary 1897.

17 Jetson states that 'the oft-quoted corollary that the process [making tracks] would produce new finds was also unquestioned';
Jetson, *It's A Different Country Down There*, 35.

18 Josiah Innes, Diary 1897.

for nothing.[19] This working season ended in June with the deposit continuing to show strong promise.[20] As Josiah Innes' mine, and the others nearby, developed, traffic along the Mole Creek Track increased. Not towards Launceston and the North, but west over the few miles to the EBR at the Pieman Bridge. They would get their share from the mine's profits because Launceston invested strongly in West Coast mines. By this stage, the rough survey line had been made into a pack track, which was enough for the small demands of exploration and development of the mineral field. As a pack track, the Mole Creek Track cost more to build than a bush-track, but it was much cheaper to carry larger loads on horses than on men's backs, refer to Table 5.1.[21]

The next working season began in February 1899 and the mines continued to develop. Samples of rich ore were sent out to impress investors.[22] And now the load on the Mole Creek Track between Mount Farrell and the EBR increased to the point that it couldn't sustain. The first complaint was in late May 1899 when two bags of samples were sent for display in Launceston.[23] The soft sections of the track were reinforced with corduroy in July.[24] Sub-Inspector Coleman, who supervised the original work, made the surprising statement that it 'was never a good job'.[25]

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19 Ibid.

20 "Managers' Report", *Launceston Examiner*, March 19, 1898;
"West Coast Mining, Rosebery", *Launceston Examiner,* June 16, 1898.

21 Lou Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast,* 162;
"What men can carry", *Examiner*, August 9, 1904.

22 "Managers' Reports", *Launceston Examiner*, February 14, 1899.

23 "Mount Farrell", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 24, 1899;
Secretary Packer to Sub Inspector Rule May 30, 1899, *PWD 2*, AOT.

24 Sub-Inspector Rule to Secretary Packer, August 27, 1899, *PWD 18/1/3430,* AOT.

25 Ibid.

Damage to the track was inevitable and demonstrates that all tracks, no matter how well made, will fail under the pressure of heavy use. The track was repaired again in November and, by May 1900 two men were working almost full time to keep it open. All the while, as the work at the mines increased, the horse traffic increased and destroyed the repairs almost as soon as they were made. In August 1900, the PWD increased the maintenance gang to three men.[26] The track couldn't keep up anymore. By then the Mount Farrell mines had three hundred tonnes of ore 'at grass' waiting to be taken out.[27] Within two years of being made the Mole Creek track was no longer strong enough to serve the mine that it had nurtured from birth. Agitation now started for a road.[28] The new Minister for Lands & Works, Edward Mulachy, resisted, this time for a very practical reason, roads are not suited to the West Coast.[29] The few roads that were made here cut up quickly and were expensive to make and maintain.[30]

The solution was a tramway, which Mulachy said 'would undoubtedly be the most effective means of meeting the requirements of the case'.[31] After a number of false starts, a wooden horse-drawn tramway linked Mount Farrell with the Emu Bay Railway in November 1902 and traffic on the track changed from a flood of pack horses to the occasional miner or tourist.[32] The tramway was part of the

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26 Secretary Packer to Mount Farrell Progress Committee, August 5, 1900, *PWD 2*, AOT.

27 Editorial, *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 16, 1900.

28 "Murchison-Farrell District", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 23, 1900;
"Mount Farrell", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 19, 1900;
Editorial, *Zeehan & Dundas Herald* (Zeehan), May 22, 1900;
"Mount Farrell District", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, May 25, 1900;
Secretary Packer to Sub-Inspector Rule, April 30, 1900, *PWD 2*, AOT.

29 Minister Mulachy to North Mount Farrell Mining Co, July 11, 1900, *PWD 2*, AOT.

30 Charles Whitham, *Western Tasmania, A Land of Riches and Beauty.* (Queenstown: Board of Management: Robert Sticht Memorial Library, 1949): 62.

31 Ibid.

32 *Celebrating the Centenary of the North Farrell Tramway*, November 2002.

normal progress to heavier transport for a successful mine.[33] On the West Coast, any working mine had to be served by a tramway or railway to haul the tons of ore, at an economic freight rate, and bring in the food and mining equipment. The Mount Farrell mines continued to grow, and soon outgrew the wooden drawn tramway, In 1907, it was re-routed and up-graded to steam.[34] This narrow tramway and its diminutive trains, the 'Wee Georgie Wood' and the 'Wee Mary Wood', served the Mount Farrell mines until modern roads reached the area in 1962.[35]

However, in other parts of the West Coast, stronger demand could only be satisfied by the standard 3 foot 6 inch railway, such as the EBR. The freight costs were much cheaper, because of the much higher hauling capacity of railways, but it was expensive to build a railway.

	Cost to Make (£/mile)	Cost of Transport (pence/ton/mile)	Maximum Load (ton)
Bush Track	3		
Pack Track	87	100	0.09
Horse Tramway[36]	375	15	2
Steam Tramway[37]	2,000	15	20
Railway[38]	7,000 – 15,000	6	150

33 Prichard stated that '[t]racks first for the prospector, followed by trams for the investor and the miner, is the one live policy of the colony at present'.
Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, April 10, 1899.

34 Lou Rae, A *History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast*", 165.

35 Ibid., 168.

36 Lou Rae, A *History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast*", 163-164.

37 Ibid., 165.

38 "Hercules Mines", *Launceston Examiner*, August 2, 1899;
"Silver", *Launceston Examiner,* July 17, 1899.

Table 5-1 Transport Costs

After 1902, the Mole Creek Track between Mount Farrell and the Pieman River and Rosebery saw only an occasional prospector, miner or tourist. By 1915, it had been replaced by another track to Rosebery and the Murchison River Suspension Bridge was a wreck.[39] Nothing more is heard of this part of the track along the Pieman River until bulldozers moved in, in 1979, to do the twentieth century version of prospecting.[40] The track was opened out from the Cutty Sark mine east towards Tullah.[41] The last few miles to the Murchison River were already overgrown and lost.[42] This was also the time of dam-building and access roads. When the dam filled in 1986, about 3 ½ miles of track, including the old suspension wires from Murchison Suspension Bridge, were submerged.[43] The remaining track, now a road, still retains its gentle curves and steady grade. The rest of this part of the track is rarely used.

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West of Mount Farrell, the track had a longer life. William Aylett didn't get rich from the Mount Farrell mine, but the country between Mount Farrell and Barn Bluff, was his domain for many years. At least until the bushwalkers arrived. The Mole Creek Track allowed prospectors from the West Coast to reach the

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Charles Whitham, *Western Tasmania, A Land of Riches and Beauty*, (Queenstown: Board of Management: Robert Sticht Memorial Library, 1949): 62-63.

39 "The Murchison Bridge, About to be Pulled Down", *Examiner*, March 30, 1915.

40 JHA Mill, Mt. Black Exploration Licence 1/62, Report on Work Undertaken to June 20, 1979, Geological Department Report No.131, Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australia, January 1980, Mineral Resources Tasmania

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Australian Natural Resources Atlas, http://www.anra.gov.au/topics/water/availability/tas/basin-pieman- river.html accessed January 4, 2011

country east of Mount Farrell, which included the old mineral finds around Barn Bluff and Lake Windermere. They stepped in to exploit this area with vigour and some of the fields were revived.

The ebb and flow of interest in minerals in the country south of Cradle Mountain had been driven by improved access since 1891 when the Mole Creek and Zeehan Railway survey reached the Pelion Plains. This sparked a small rush for silver, which was the preferred mineral of the day, but this had petered out by 1893.[44] In 1892, the Mole Creek and Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Company (MCZMPEC) joined in and combined track-cutting with prospecting when it made its own track, a predecessor of the Mole Creek Track, as far as Granite Tor.[45] First, they were briefly involved in the Pelion Plains silver field, but their main find was coal at Barn Bluff. Joseph Will, their lead prospector, who worked with Con Russell and William Aylett, was credited with a series of discoveries, but most weren't followed up. As well as coal, copper was found at Lake Windermere and Russell found tin near Barn Bluff.[46] Others were active too, such as Harry Andrews and James Swallow, who found copper at Lake McRae.[47]

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44 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 72.

45 Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, March 1, 1892;
"The Mole Creek and Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Co. Limited, AN Important Discovery", *Launceston Examiner*, March 12, 1892;
"Mole Creek and Zeehan Company, Half-Yearly Meeting", *Launceston Examiner,* September 1, 1894.

46 "Mining News, Coal", *Tasmanian*, May 21, 1892;
Alexander Mackintosh Reid, "The Mount Pelion Mineral District", *Geological Survey Bulletin,* No. 30, Department of Mines, Tasmania, (1919): 5

47 Ibid.

Figure 5-2 Prospectors at Pelion Plains Huts (Spurling, *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898)

Innes' survey in 1896, which had included William Aylett, did not greatly improve access to the area, but it did mark a flourish of interest. The silver field at the Pelion Plains was revived, this time as a copper field, and a new set of mineral leases were taken out and worked by Deloraine interests.[48] Aylett, and his long term prospecting companion Phil Parsons, took up coal leases on the northern side of Mount Ossa, and on Mount Pelion West, which may have included one of Will's earlier discoveries.[49] By 1901, the Pelion Plains mineral leases were deserted again.[50]

The opening of the Mole Creek Track in 1899 caused another burst of activity, but this time it was West Coast interests moving east along the track who revived

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48 Ibid., 58.

49 Diagram of Mineral Survey, County of Lincoln, Parish of Mt Pelion & Osser [sic], Lease 1857/93M, 1897, Mineral Resources Tasmania.

50 Tim Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise; A History of the Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve to May 1922" (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005): 376.

some of the earlier discoveries.[51] Copper at Lake Windermere boomed for a short while, with 12 leases being taken out, and another four leases were taken nearby in the deep valley of Curran and Swallow Creeks.[52] The most promising act of rediscovery and reinvention was the copper lodes at Lake McRae, which were worked by CP Smith and Thomas Cook from Tullah in 1899.

The dominance of traffic from the West was illustrated by a tragedy and a near tragedy. In March 1901, TJ Connelly, a Rosebery publican grub-staking Jim Swallow at Lake Windermere, walked into his camp, left his wet swag containing food and whiskey, and then continued 12 miles further on, passing huts at Pelion Plains before dying of exposure on the February Plains.[53] Connelly was not an experienced bushman, but only a few months later, in May 1901, two men coming from Tullah almost froze to death trying to reach the Cradle Mountain area. They were rescued by men at the Barn Bluff mines, but their horse and dog died of exposure.[54]

The steady flow of men and horses from Tullah to the mineral fields south of Cradle Mountain soon found problems with the track. By April 1900, it was blocked 'for some distance by fallen timber' at the top of Mount Swallow and, later in the year, between the Mackintosh River and Mount Swallow, it was

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51 Ibid.

52 McIntosh Reid, "The Mount Pelion Mineral District", Plate IV.

53 "The West Coast", *Mercury*, April 4, 1901;
"A Ghastly Discovery", *Mercury*, December 6, 1901;
Inquest No. 11394, Thomas James Connelly, SC195/1/74 Findings, Depositions and Associated Papers Relating to Coroners Inquests, AOT.
Connelly was also widely known as Connolly.

54 "The Barn Bluff District, Virtually Snowed Up, Narrow Escapes from Death", *Examiner,* May 20, 1901.

impassable 'for both men and horses'.[55] Money was spent, but early in 1901 repairs to the track were 'the most pressing want' in the district.[56] After this the slow decline of the mineral fields at Lake Windermere and Barn Bluff meant there was little traffic.

Walkers and horses returned in some numbers to the track from Tullah in 1910 when William Aylett started a small boom at Mount Inglis, where he had found tin at Russell Creek, a tributary of the Bluff River.[57] This started a regular pattern of work for Aylett. He would interest a company in developing his tin deposit and then make money helping them at the mine and packing supplies, and he would take PWD money to clear out the track to his tin "show". He managed a number of revivals up until 1928.

Aylett's claim at Bluff River was quickly surrounded by other leases. But the track to Tullah was in poor condition. It was blocked by wind and snow felled timber, regrowth and rotted culverts and corduroy. In July 1910, part of the Sophia Bridge was down and the track was a 'quagmire'.[58] There were only 'one or two parties' working the field by "sluicing" the tin, but horses couldn't use the track and instead the men had to carry all their own supplies. The dense tin ore

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55 Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount".
Secretary Packer to Chief Inspector South, August 30, 1900, *PWD 2*, AOT.

56 Secretary Packer to Mount Farrell Progress Committee, September 19, 1900, PWD 2, AOT; "The Minister of Lands at Mount Farrell", *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, February 25, 1901.

57 AJ Noldart and DJ Jenning, "Bluff River Tin Deposits", Mineral Resources Tasmania Report TR11_13_15, 1968;
QJ Henderson, "Bluff River Tin Deposits", Mineral Resources Tasmania Report UR1891_1691_197_199, May 22, 1944.

58 NR Powell to Minister of Lands and Works July 12, 1910, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

was too heavy to carry out.[59] The PWD responded, and the track was 'put in order', but the field faded and work, and traffic, stopped.[60]

By January 1914, the time and the elements had taken their toll and, despite very little traffic, the track between the Sophia River and Mount Inglis was unfit for men and horses.[61] In July, Aylett requested £30 to clear fallen timber from the track to access his mine.[62] In early 1916, there was still little traffic along the track, but the local PWD inspector asked, unsuccessfully, for funds to repair the Sophia Bridge.[63] Aylett did get some money and reopened the track for £25.[64]

In January 1917, Aylett started the first revival of his tin mine and asked for the track to be cleared, but he was refused.[65] The mine finally re-opened in 1918 and repairs to the track were approved.[66] Aylett didn't get the job this time, which may have motivated his complaints about the quality of the work.[67] The bridge on the Sophia River was replaced at a cost of £600 after a packer's horse had fallen and died there.[68] In all, the track had six culverts repaired or replaced, ten stone crossings fixed, 14 trees cleared off, scrub cleared for three miles, 30 feet of corduroy made and other 'sundry repairs'.[69] Even with the mine working, some

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59 NR Powell to Minister of Lands & Works, September 5, 1910, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT;
Petition to Minister for Lands and Works, July 16, 1910, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

60 R Grubb to Engineer in Chief, August 10, 1914, *PWD 24/1/18* , AOT.

61 R Grubb to Engineer in Chief, January 23, 1915, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

62 W Aylett to Minister of Mines, July 20, 1914, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

63 Engineer in Chief to Minister for Lands & Works, June 11, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

64 Ibid.

65 W Aylett, October 3, 1917, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT;
Engineer in Chief to Minister for Lands & Works, June 11, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

66 Secretary for Public Works to NE Jennings, July 13, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

67 W Aylett to FW Trappes, July 4, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

68 NE Jennings to Minister for Public Works, July 9, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

69 HH Simmons to Engineer in Chief, August 24, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT;

officials felt that that the traffic and returns from the mining didn't justify the expense.[70] Despite all this work, in late 1919, the local PWD Inspector said that the track was in 'a deplorable condition' and recommended a wide range of work; 15 miles of clearing scrub, repairs to 35 culverts and over half a mile of corduroy.[71] Some work was done.[72]

1920 saw the next rival of the tin deposit, which, despite being known for ten years, was reported as a 'promising tin discovery'.[73] A Melbourne syndicate took up the leases, and Aylett prospected for them.[74] The condition of the track brought the, by now, familiar, complaints: the track was 'dangerous to foot & horse traffic', it was a 'series of bogs', the corduroy on the Sophia Flats was 'deplorable' and a hut at Granite Tor was 'in the penultimate stage of dilapidation'.[75] A visiting tourist described it as 'one of the worst tracks [he had] travelled in any part of Australasia'.[76] Although, West Coast historian and bushwalker, Charles Whitham had walked it a few months earlier and described it as 'a good one', even if it was poorly marked east of the tin mines to Lake Will.[77] Some more money was approved to clear the track.[78]

Inspector of Roads A Holmes to FW Trappes, September 27, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

70 Inspector of Roads A Holmes to FW Trappes, September 27, 1918, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

71 HH Simmons to Secretary Public Works, November 14, 1919 *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

72 Mole Creek Rosebery Track, Expenditure July & August 1919, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

73 "Mining, A Promising Discovery", *Weekly Courier,* April 8, 1920.

74 Ibid.

75 James Oddman (Charles Whitham), "The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* May 7, 1920;
E Brown to Secretary Public Works, May 21, 1920, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT;
Bluff River Tin Mine Syndicate to Minister of Public Works, November 18, 1920, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

76 E Brown to Secretary Public Works, May 21, 1920, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

77 Whitham, "The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount".

78 Tullah – Rosebery Track: Cleaning, May-June 1920, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

Complaints followed in 1922 and Aylett re-opened the track in 1923.[79] In 1926, he wanted to do more clearing and repair.[80] The last revival, at least for Aylett, was in 1927. The track needed the usual work: clearing and repairs to the culverts. The new mine operator recommended 'a practical man', which was 'Mr Aylett' who had 'years of experience'.[81] The local PWD inspector disagreed with the amount of work, and with the worker, because Aylett was, by now, an 'old man'.[82] However, Aylett made the repairs in early 1928.[83] The mine, because it was just outside of the Cradle Mountain Reserve, was worked briefly one last time in 1943 and 1944, but this time access was from Cradle Valley.[84] Tullah residents were said to have hunted through this country in the first few decades of last century, and there was evidence of 'several permanent camps in the shadow of Barn Bluff'.[85]

The amount of work on this part of the track demonstrates something more than Aylett's persistence in getting government work. Tracks in this country and climate are fragile, which was the major reason that they need regular attention; but it was quite normal for tracks to be opened at great expense and then allowed to be reclaimed by the bush. The track between Rosebery and the Pieman River

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79 Track between Tullah and Bluff River (Clearing), July 14, 1923, *PWD1/1/242 General Correspondence, 22/7-5 & 22/12-8 Innes Track 1897*, AOT.

80 A Davern, "A Tramp to the West, Queenstown to Launceston", *Weekly Courier*, January 5, 1922;
W Aylett to Sub Inspector Doyle, November 4, 1926, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

81 WH Chellis to Minister of Lands and Works, October 13, 1927, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

82 P Doyle to Secretary for Public Works, October 13, 1927, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

83 P Doyle to Secretary for Public Works, January 21, 1928, *PWD 24/1/18,* AOT.

84 AJ Noldart and DJ Jenning, Bluff River Tin Deposits, Mineral Resources Tasmania Report TR11_13_15, 1968; personal communication W. Connell

85 Lambert, "Innes Track", 64.
Recreational hunting and subsistence snaring is possible, but shelters at Barn Bluff have been attributed to the Connells.
Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 151.

and between Mount Farrell and the Emu Bay Railway showed the damage that could be done by heavy usage, but regrowth and decay were just as destructive. There had been little traffic between Tullah and Bluff River, but nature took a heavy toll. Snow falls and strong winds brought down trees and bushes. Regrowth, particularly bauera, button-grass and tea-tree, can encroach on a track quickly and within a couple of years block it completely. The most insidious was decay of the timber in corduroy, culverts and bridges.

A few miles of the track in the Brougham River valley were cleared out by an exploration company in 1980s.[86] The structures on the rest of this section decayed and regrowth took over. The Mackintosh Dam was constructed, which, in 1980, flooded the track across the Sophia Flats and the bridge.[87] Access roads for dam-building destroyed much of the track near Tullah. The proclamation of the Granite Tor Conservation Area in 1996 gave it some protection.[88] After the 1940s, the track between Tullah and Lake Will received only a few visitors and most were bushwalkers.

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The rest of the Mole Creek Track, east from Lake Will, was the domain of the Northerners. They had agitated for the Mole Creek Track, but ended up restricted to its eastern end. They had agitated the strongest for it, but they benefited the

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86 D Speijers, Shell Company of Australia, E.L. 2/78 Granite Tor Location of Brougham & Romulus East Grids, February 16, 1982, Mineral Resources of Tasmania

87 Australian Natural Resources Atlas, http://www.anra.gov.au/topics/water/availability/tas/basin-pieman-river.html (accessed January 4, 2011).

88 Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Reserve Listing, Conservation Areas, http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=5730, (accessed January 4, 2011).

least. Even before the track was completed it needed repairs. In December 1898, Overseer Broomhall and his gang returned to work to find trees across the track between Liena and Mount Pelion West.[89] District Surveyor Henry Chalmers reported 'scores of trees [had been] brought down'.[90] That was the product of one winter.

There was little traffic from the Liena end when the track was completed. This changed in October 1900 when supplies were packed to the Barn Bluff Copper Mines about once per week.[91] Even though it was only a few years old, the mine manager found the track in a 'bad state'.[92] In places it was 'veritable man traps' and 'quagmires into which the horses disappeared almost from sight'.[93] It is likely he was referring to the February Plains, which were boggy and had little forming done. In February 1901, George Waller, Assistant Government Geologist, and in April, JW Beattie, pioneer photographer and tourism promoter, rode from Liena to inspect the mineral discoveries near the Pelion Plains and Barn Bluff.[94] They both criticised the track. Beattie recommended 'a bit of corduroy here and there, and in exceptional boggy places, cutting out the turf altogether, and getting down to the solid gravel'.[95] He also thought that the stakes were too far apart.[96]

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89 "Mole Creek Track, Progress of the Work, Unfavourable Weather", *Launceston Examiner*, December 14, 1898.

90 Report of the Surveyor-General & Secretary for Lands 1898-1899, *JPPP*, No 47, (1899): 28.

91 G Waller, Report on the Mineral Districts of Bell Mount, Dove River, Five-Mile Rise, Mount Pelion and Barn Bluff Secretary for Mines Report, *JPPP*, No 4 (1901): 66.

92 "Barn Bluff, Deplorable State of Track", *Examiner*, December 24, 1900.

93 Ibid.

94 John Watt Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", *Proceedings and Papers of Royal Society of Tasmania,* (September 9, 1901): xxvi.

95 Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", xxxii.

96 Ibid.

Nineteen hundred and two marked the next step in the development of the NWDRA's alternative to the Mole Creek Track, when Robert Ewart set out for Queenstown.[97] He left the track at the Pelion Plains and marked a route. But, by now, the NWDRA had lost its energy and Ewart's survey wasn't made into a pack track and was soon reclaimed by the bush.

The traffic along the track from Liena had been light, but it was regular. However, after May 1902, it practically stopped when a short cut across the Forth Gorge was completed as access to the Barn Bluff Copper Mines.[98] Richard Broomhall had returned to take on this job.[99] First he made a road from Liena, on the Mersey, to Lorinna, on the Forth River, and then formed the Barn Bluff Track.[100] It wasn't a good pack track, because of the steep grades, but it did provide all weather access to the mines. Lack of good access was a cry often falsely taken up for many small mines, but a £625 track couldn't save these low grade mines, and they were abandoned in 1903.[101] Although they still attracted promoters for a few years yet. An attempt to revive them in 1907 failed.[102] They were worked briefly in 1911 after the track had been cleaned out by Michael Rose.[103] EC James was an over-enthusiastic promoter of these mines and

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97 Robert Ewart, Report on Track Mt Pelion towards Gormanston, via Eldon Bluff, in Department of Lands & Surveys: Report for 1901-2, *JPPP*, (1902): 37.

98 *Ledgers of Payments to Contractors, 1902, 63 Vic 41 Item 319 PWD 117*, AOT.

99 "Deloraine", *Examiner*, January 1, 1902.

100 G Simmons. to Secretary of Public Works, August, 31, 1899, *PWD18/1/3671 Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 62 Vic 59 Item 4012 - Tracks Generally*, AOT.

101 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 81.

102 Jetson, "Almost a Walker's Paradise", 394.

103 CP Smith to Engineer in Chief, July 1911, PWD 24/1/1, AOT.

continued to boost them up until the 1940s when his energy was only curbed by his death.[104]

Prospectors didn't make much further use of the track. The cattlemen from Mole Creek and Liena may have welcomed the better access brought by the Mole Creek Track, but they said little. After all, the cattlemen had been taking their stock through to the Borradaile, February and Pelion Plains since the 1850s, so little changed for them.[105] They even abandoned the track between the Borradaile and the middle of the February Plains, preferring their old route. Tree falls blocked the new route and it returned to nature. They did embrace the section of track from Wurragarra Creek to Lake Ayr and kept that open until it was taken over by bushwalkers in the 1960s. Cattle were driven from Mole Creek and Liena for the summer grazing and also from Lorinna.[106] However, after 1917, the Lorinna cattlemen adopted a new track cut up the Forth River valley, and under the edge of Mount Oakleigh, to the grazing land at the Pelion Plains. The Mole Creek Track from Liena to the Pelion Plains was now the reserve of a small number of Mole Creek and Liena cattlemen and hunters. Agistment of stock on the Pelion and February Plains continued until 1958 and left many signs including huts, stockyards, fences and gates.

Hunters had been active in the country along the Mole Creek Track from the very beginning, because hunting was a good source of food in the bush. The fur trade also offered very good money for the locals. William Aylett was just one of the

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104 Tim Jetson, "That some rich lode amongst these hills is waiting for us yet: Balancing Mining and Environmental Concerns in the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania", *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, 7 (September 2009): 54.

105 Simon Cubit, Personal communication, December 6, 1999.

106 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 104.

men who hunted in the area. Paddy Hartnett, Bert Nichols and Tommy McCoy also worked in this country, making rough tracks, huts and skin-sheds. Each person had their own territory. Their livelihood was impacted by the protection and expansion of the Reserve, as the Cradle Mountain – Lake St. Clair area was known. Some of them adapted and others moved on. Seasonal cattle-grazing and fur hunting was pushed from the country along the Mole Creek Track, but the Pelion Plains was becoming increasingly busy with other users, bushwalkers, and they progressively opened up some of the track that had been "lost''.

Figure 5-3 Paddy Hartnett (l), William Aylett (4th left), Norman and Phil Parsons (included) (Terry, *Identities and History of Tasmania's High Country*, 94)

* * *

One last section of the Mole Creek Track will be considered here, but it will receive only a little attention because it has a long history of its own. The very start of the Mole Creek Track, between Liena and Gads Hill was busy before the track was made because it lay on the main route to Lorinna and served the grazing

leases south of Gads Hill. A track had existed to the Borradaile Plains since the 1870s to access grazing land at Arm River, Howells Plains and Lees Paddocks.[107] This continued until low level access allowed a more direct route to Lees Paddocks and Arm River. Mole Creek people with long traditions in the area still continue to graze cattle on these plains in summer.[108] Some roads had taken up parts of this old route, but even though the surface is modern, the grades and curves are still those of the Mole Creek Track.

The opening of the Mole Creek Track, after years of agitation to build it, was the time when reality tested the many widely optimistic claims made for it. Naturally when the grab-bag of claims for tracks was plundered recklessly, as it was for the Mole Creek Track, many were later revealed for what they were.

On the grand scale, it didn't become an effective link between central and western Tasmania. The opening of the EBR, and the harbour works at mouth of Macquarie Harbour to open Hell's Gates, were the death knell for the schemes from the North and the South.[109] However, the inertia continued for a while. In the South, the Great Western Railway continued to flicker in and out of life until 1907 when reality finally stopped it. In the North, the NWDRA moved their attention to an overland link with Mount Lyell, but never with the passion that they put into the Mole Creek Track. This was their last hurrah.

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107 Plan 11, 1877, Lands Titles Office Survey Department, Hobart.

108 Peter Brown and Simon Cubit, Conservation Management Plan for Borradaile Plain Hut, Mersey River, Northern Tasmania, (June 2002), Unpublished report for Forestry Tasmania.

109 Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, 6th ed. (Hobart: St. David's Park Publishing, 2000), p 122

On a local level, the Mole Creek Track did have some success. It was everything that was expected of a track for Mount Farrell. It was there for the discovery of the minerals, the testing of its richness and its early nurturing until finally the successful mine outgrew it. The mine at Mount Farrell demonstrated the developing transport needs for a mine as it grows; from bush track, to pack track, to tramway to railway. It also showed the limitations of a pack track and the damage that can be done by over-use. The energy of the West Coast prospectors and developers moved the centre of gravity of the track from the east to the west. They put new energy in the discoveries made, but abandoned by Launceston and Mole Creek interests. One of these was the tin deposit on the Bluff River at Mount Inglis. It also showed that under-use of a track can be just as destructive as over-use. Without regular maintenance, which was rarely given to tracks, regrowth and rot will effectively destroy a track.

CHAPTER 6 BUSHWALKERS

When the Cradle Mountain Scenic Reserve was proclaimed in 1922 it effectively marked the end of an era for the Mole Creek Track and the start of another. The bush-workers - prospectors, snarers, cattlemen and packers - would continue to use the track for many years, but it now served new masters, bushwalkers. Some bush-workers continued to follow their old ways, either pushed outside of the Reserve, or illegally within it. They also adapted to support the bushwalkers, guiding, packing, building huts and maintaining tracks, some even became rangers.

The bushwalkers had different needs. They adapted the track to their needs. Some parts of it were abandoned and others reinvigorated. They also changed the identity of the track.

Nineteen twenty-two marks the time that conservation, in the form of the Scenic Preservation Board, took almost complete control of the Cradle Mountain area. Although, parts of the Mole Creek Track stood, and some still stand, outside of the sometimes limited protection that a National Park, or a Conservation Zone, can give. However, while a single date is a convenient way to think about the use of the track, it is always more complicated than that.

Like in the previous chapter, the track has to be considered as fragments that served local needs, rather than a long overland link to the West Coast. In 1896, Frederick Prichard, editor of the *Launceston Examiner*, didn't appreciate the attractions of the scenery in the Cradle Mountain region because he hadn't been

there. Naturally, Daniel Griffin, the Deloraine correspondent for the *Mercury*, would have argued the finer points of the most beautiful or spectacular views. And with some authority, because he did know the country well, and had even reached the summit of Cradle Mountain in 1882.[1] Prichard hadn't considered tourism because he, the North West Direct Route Association (NWDRA) and the Launceston businessmen, wanted trade, first and foremost. When Con Russell and William Aylett reported on their route for the NWDRA they did mention the mountains, streams and lakes, but only as impediments to direct overland communications. Tourism, or the scenery, didn't become important until 1898 when Prichard took a trip along the track. Although he must have anticipated what he might find because he took the pioneering wilderness photographer, Stephen Spurling III, along to record the scenery.[2]

Prichard had read EG Innes' reports, in 1896, when he had gone 'into rhapsodies over' the country along the survey line, and earned the ire of Griffin.[3] Along the route of the track there were five places that were guaranteed to strike any visitor with a romantic bone in their body. These points received attention, in both writing and photographs, on almost every trip, from "Jasper" in 1892 to walkers today.[4]

The first point of scenic significance along the track was the Divide, in the middle of the February Plains. It gives a fine panorama of mountains, just part of which

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1 Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle; A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country* (1998), 88.

2 Prichard, "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898.

3 Griffin, "From the North West to West, A Surveyor Criticised", *Tasmania Mail*, January 16, 1896.

4 Jasper, "A Trip to the Interior", *North Coast Standard*, February 24, 1892.
However, some of these locations are rarely visited by modern walkers.

is shown in Figure 1-37. The next was a few miles south where the end of the elevated valley of Wurragarra Creek overlooks Lees Paddocks and its surrounding mountains, as can be appreciated from Figure 6.1. Further along, the grasslands around Lake Ayr, a 'beautiful sheet of water' if there ever was one, was admired, and the distinctive shape of Mount Oakleigh in the background was, and is, too much for anyone with a camera to ignore.[5] Figure 1-10 and Figure 6-2 give some idea of this prospect. On the northern edge of the pine forest at Pine Forest Moor, the Forth River Gorge drops away as a high cliff, and this allowed an uninterrupted view of the valley. It even had JW Beattie, who thought there was better scenery in the South, in his own rhapsodies (Figures Figure 1-13 and Figure 6-6).[6] For those who ventured further west, the view from the side of Mount Inglis, with Barn Bluff and Cradle Mountain as neighbours, was another panorama that drew out poetry and admiration, as Figure 1-17 and Figure 7- show.

Figure 6-1 Wurragarra Divide, View of Lees Paddocks (Brown 1987)

5 Ibid.

6 John Watt Beattie, "Notes on a Trip to the Barn Bluff Country", *Proceedings and Papers of Royal Society of Tasmania,* (September 9, 1901): xxix.

Figure 6-2 Mount Oakleigh and Lake Ayr (Spurling 1898, National Trust of Australia)

Innes gave the appreciation of the scenery a significant start. He had been directed to examine a lot of practical things such as timber, agricultural land, minerals and rivers for power, but he was not instructed to consider the tourism potential of the country.[7] Nevertheless, he chose to end his report with the words

> once a practical line of traffic is formed it should prove an attraction for tourists, as, for mountain and lake scenery, especially in the vicinity of Barn Bluff and the Cradle Mountain, it forms one of the most beautiful portions of the Colony.[8]

These comments were not an unusual appreciation of the countryside because at the time nature tourism was emerging in Tasmania, and Innes had visited New Zealand where this industry was much more developed.[9] But his remarks did strike a cord with Prichard and others.

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7 Secretary Public Works to EG Innes, October 16, 1896, *PWD 2/124/145, Letterbooks of General Outward Correspondence*, AOT.

8 EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP)*, Vol. 37, Paper 43, (August 3, 1897): 11.

9 EG Innes, "Correspondence, Mole Creek Track to the West, A Practical Route Secured, The Murchison Crossed, Mr Innes Replies to 'The Tramp'", *Launceston Examiner*, April 12, 1897.

Although prospecting and mining along the Mole Creek Track were more important, the scenery attracted the attention of the promoters and guides for the first few years that it was open. Stephen Spurling III's pictures in July 1898 were the first of this country and were featured in a supplement to the *Launceston Examiner*.[10] Prichard used them to illustrate a description of the journey they had taken in March 1898, which focused on the beauty of the country. Photography was the perfect medium to make this case.[11]

The scenery attracted the other great Tasmanian nature photographer of the time, JW Beattie. He had a well established interest in remote and picturesque places, and added the Mole Creek Track to his tally. The weather in April 1901 was poor, a photographers nightmare, but he was able to get some stunning pictures, some of which he adorned with evocative titles: 'Gathering Mists', 'Evening Mists' and 'Wintery Weather'.[12] He opened up a new front in the parochial arguments about the track by refuting the claim that the Pelion region was 'unsurpassed in Tasmania' and said, to his southern audience, that he found 'that our Upper Huon Country, representing the Arthurs, Mt Anne, Lk [sic] Pedder, and the Port Davey Country, still stand up, in point of some excellence "head and shoulders above it"'.[13] Although he did find some views to admire. He continued to stir the parochial pot by claiming that he was the first to photograph in the area and adding that the track was in bad condition. Local miners complained too, particularly about the February Plains, but some of Beattie's

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10 Prichard, "Mole Creek Track", *Launceston Examiner*, July 9, 1898.

11 Ibid.;
Despite the track being cut and well marked, Prichard and Spurling were guided by the local prospector Phil Parsons, a long term partner of William Aylett.

12 JW Beattie, Notes for presentation of "Notes on the Country near Barn Bluff", Royal Society of Tasmania, (1901), University of Tasmania Archives, RS29.

13 Ibid.

comments were a repetition, almost word for word, of Griffin's earlier complaints and some were outside of Beattie's experience to make.[14]

The scenery at the western end didn't receive the same early attention and certainly not the photographic adoration that Spurling and Beattie had given the eastern route to the Pelion Plains. The full extent of Innes' comments of the view from Mount Inglis was that it gave 'a fine view of the country westward'.[15]

In 1900, James Windermere Lord made a trip from Rosebery to 'Barn Bluff Mount' mainly to the mineral discoveries. But he spent much of a long article describing the mountains and lakes, one of which is named after him, Lake Windermere.[16] 'What place for the painter or photographer', he said, hoping that '[s]ome day they will be here, and their hearts will be gladdened'.[17] Like Beattie, and other nature painters and photographers, Lord was using the language of the time, the "sublime", that described the relationship between people and a dominant landscape. At Mount Inglis he started the tradition of listing an inventory of the mountains visible from the mountain, running into 11 named mountains and 'many others whose names I forget, or never knew'.[18]

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14 Like Spurling and Prichard, he was guided by locals; Harry Andrews and the Parsons brothers.

15 Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black", 5.

16 JW Lord, "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount", *Tasmanian Mail,* April 28, 1900.

17 Lord "A Trip to Barn Bluff Mount".

18 Ibid.

Figure 6-3 Mount Pillinger from Pelion Plains (Beattie 1901, TMAG)

Figure 6-4 Mts Ossa, Thetis and Pelion West from North (Beattie 1901, TMAG)

Whether from the east or the west, in a short time, people lost interest in the scenery. It had always been subsidiary to the mineral discoveries, which were important attractions for Prichard and Beattie. The new tracks to Barn Bluff Mines and the Zigzag track to the Pelion Plains took most of the infrequent traffic from the Mole Creek Track.

In the years up to 1920 the Mole Creek Track was almost the exclusive domain of snarers, cattlemen and prospectors. This was the period that Ronald Smith, a land owner at Cradle Valley and friend of Gustav Weindorfer, called the 'Dark Ages'.[19] A few early bushwalkers had penetrated the gloom of the 'Dark Ages' such as the Perrins in 1907 and the McClintons in 1921, both guided by Paddy Hartnett, a snarer and prospector.[20] The coming of the bushwalkers and the proclamation of the Scenic Reserve were the dawn of a new period of appreciation, and the Mole Creek Track was part of this, acting as access and as the basis for some important new routes.

In March 1920, Charles Whitham, an ardent historian, tourism promoter and bushwalker, visited Weindorfer at Cradle Valley and then walked through to Tullah along the Mole Creek Track. This is interesting but not significant in itself.[21] However, it is remarkable in that his account of this journey marked a change in the history of the track. Under his pseudonym of 'James Oddman', Whitham reported his trip in the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald,* which he interspersed with snatches of poetry and long descriptive passages of the scenery,

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19 Ronald Smith, "Exploration of Cradle Mountain, Very Little Known of Climbers of the Past", *Advocate*, March 16, 1937.

20 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 110.

21 Lindsay Whitham, "Railways, Mines, Pubs and People', (Sandy Bay: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 2002): 232.

particularly at Mount Inglis.[22] The new users of the Mole Creek Track and the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair region had a strong inclination towards poetry and a romantic disposition to their wilderness.[23] His intention was to 'pick up Innes' Track, which runs, or ran, from Mole Creek to Mount Farrell' and goes 'by devious ways to Mount Farrell'.[24] He followed the track 'if ever I found that trail' west and on the first night camped near Mount Inglis at 'the Glade of Kubla Khan dreamed of by Coleridge'.[25]

Under the heading of 'Dissertation Upon Innes' Track, Falsely So-Called', Whitham first attacked the 'Lands Office' for not keeping tracks open, a fair complaint, but he then introduced a series of errors into the modern understanding of the track.[26] Whitham referred to Innes' report to Parliament, which was such a detailed and engaging account that it would, until the late 1990s, dominated the understanding of the Mole Creek Track. He informed his readers that the 'track was laid out by Mr District Surveyor Innes (to copy the quaint phraseology of the Lands Department)' and that it did not 'appear to have been re-staked since

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22 James Oddman (Charles Whitham), "The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount", *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, May 7, 1920.
At Mount Inglis, like Innes and Lord before him, he was taken by the view and called it 'a crowded hour of glorious vision'. After an uneventful, but vividly described, journey, he reached Tullah, which he called the 'best situated inland settlement on the West Coast, backed by a fine mountain; ... and there are the murmurings of innumerable waters'.

23 Another example is A Davern and his friend in 1922 who travelled from Queenstown to Cradle Valley in 1922. They left Queenstown on 22 December 'equipped with many things, including books and a mouth organ'.
A Davern "A Tramp to the West, Queenstown to Launceston", *Weekly Courier*, January 5, 1922.

24 Whitham, "The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount";
Despite the routine opening of the track by Aylett and the PWD, the track to the hut at Granite Tor was blocked by timber, but these difficulties didn't stop Davern and his friend enjoying a meal 'beyond all the bounds of modesty' and then reading Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road' before turning in. At Mount Inglis they were able to 'admire the splendour' of the 'great cluster of mountains' in front of them.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

then'.[27] Whitham's article changed the history of the Mole Creek Track. For the next 80 years it would be known as the Innes Track and the track-cutters of the Public Works Department (PWD) would be excluded from its history. This was the most significant rewriting of its history (although there were, and would be many others), which culminated in the accretion of distortions that is the received wisdom today. Very few people would go along this part of the track and it would be largely forgotten. The Cradle Mountain area would become the magnet for bushwalkers and it, in turn, would revive other parts of the Mole Creek Track.

Charles Whitham and his journey deserve a little more interrogation. He was typical of the bushwalkers entering this country in the 1920s and 1930s, such as Jack Thwaites, Frederick Smithies, ET Emmett, Weindorfer and Smith. Although they were all extraordinary in their own way. What they shared was an urban middle class background and an outsiders' appreciation of the bush. As Jetson states, interest in the wilderness was 'a class related attitude' with the 'well-to-do' active 'from the late 1890s till the 1920s ... and from the 1930s until to the late 1940s', which is also supported by Harper.[28] The middle class had been freed to follow the urge, pioneered in the late 1890s, to abandon the towns, at least for a day or two, and commune with nature by 'stable rates of pay and the expansion of the 44 hour week'.[29] Railways, motor bikes and cars were now more widely available to reach the edge of the bush to launch into their journeys.[30] They carried supplies and equipment with them to follow in the footsteps of the earlier

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27 Ibid.

28 Tim Jetson, "Hikers' Heaven? Or 'Almost a Paradise for Hikers'", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* 51/1 (March 2004): 55;
Melissa Harper, "The Ways of the Bushwalker: Bushwalking in Australia, 1788 – 1940" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2002): 333.

29 Harper, "The Ways of the Bushwalker: Bushwalking in Australia, 1788 – 1940", 269.

30 Ibid., 219.

explorers and to be explorers themselves. They wrote detailed accounts of their journeys to inform others through dedicated bushwalking magazines and newspaper articles. They peppered their writing with poetry, romanticism and history.

The early bushwalkers were highly literate and so they turned to the written record for information from their intellectual predecessors. They found reports and maps, which they trusted implicitly. And although some were guided by bushmen, many of who had worked on the tracks or knew people who did, they did not trust the oral traditions. It may have been only 20 to 30 years since the Mole Creek Track was cut, but the work of the track-cutters didn't register. This may have been because the track-cutters were considered not to have engaged intellectually with the country, unlike the surveyors and the bushwalkers. After all, surveyors were literate professionals who explored and reported, while the workers did as they were told. People like EG Innes spoke directly to the new "owners" of the Cradle Mountain region and his presence dominated any others. The predominance of educated middle class people among bushwalkers, and users of the Overland Track, is still strong and so is their appetite for written information in books and the internet.

Figure 6-5 Barn Bluff and Lake Will (Brown 1988)

Figure 6-6 Forth River Gorge (Brown 2007)

Gustav Weindorfer visited Cradle Mountain in 1909 and was active at Cradle Valley from 1912, but he rarely went far from that area. As early as December 1911, improved access and interest in Cradle Valley generated the idea of connecting it to the Mole Creek Track and District Surveyor Wilks suggested making a track from Cradle Valley to the 'track known as Innes's [sic]'.[31] There was already, he said, 'quite a lot of traffic through this route'.[32] However, he was not thinking of connecting to Lake St Clair, that was still 20 years away, or even connecting to Liena. His goal was to link Cradle Mountain and the West Coast, which '[a]part from benefit to the travelling public this track would be of very great use for tourists to these magnificent highlands'.[33] However, the time had not come to do this work, despite a price tag of £10.[34]

By the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s the time was right to connect Cradle Mountain and the Mole Creek Track, and this marked the single most significant physical development for the track. Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair had developed separately until the opening of the Overland Track, with Lake St Clair having the longest history of tourism and the best road access. However, Ronald Smith saw that, rather than being independent, their futures lay together. In July 1928, he wrote to Clive Lord, the Secretary of the National Park Board, stating that if both Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair were 'accessable [sic] to motors' and had 'suitable accommodation' that 'a large number of tourists, both from Tasmania and the mainland, will traverse it from end to end both on foot and on

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31 Wilks to Surveyor General, December 13, 1911, *PWD 24/1/3 Correspondence and associated papers relating to construction and development of tracks, including tourist tracks, generally and in municipalities*, AOT.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Engineer in Chief to F. Brown, 22 Dec 1911, *PWD 24/1/3*, AOT

horse-back'.[35] He listed the major mountains and lakes in the Reserve, and, for the first time applied, what was a generic term, describing it as the 'overland route'.[36] This was the intellectual genesis of the Overland Track. In the *Examiner*, he promoted riding or walking from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair and said 'Innes' and Ewart's track[s] [which] transverse most of the distance'.[37]

By October 1928 it was widely known that Bert Nichols, a snarer, was the person to guide people along the route.[38] In 1929, the "Come to Tasmania" organisation, in one of its pamphlets, said that 'any reasonably good bushman, with a chart, could find his way' from Lake St Clair to Cradle Mountain, because the track was now partially staked and this was a change from a 'few years ago [when] this trip would have been dubbed quite an adventure'.[39]

When Nichols first guided a party is not clear, but the first recorded journey from Lake St Clair to Cradle Mountain was on November 1927, although few details are available.[40] The next trip was in 30 December 1929. Fred Smithies and two others on an independent walk met Nichols guiding a group of eight walkers from

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35 Ronald Smith to Clive Lord, July 23, 1928, Smith Letters, Launceston Reference Library, 208.

36 Ibid.

37 "Northern National Park, Road to Cradle Mountain, Object of Combined Recommendation', *Examiner*, July 7, 1928.
The veteran hunter and tourist guide Paddy Hartnett quickly offered to form the track 'that will connect Lake St Clair with Cradell [sic] Mountain' for a 'bedrock price', but he was refused. Hartnett to Emmet, November 26, 1928, *NS234/191/13 Letters Sent and Received by Ronald Smith and Other Papers Relating to Cradle Mountain*; 5, AOT.

38 Alan Milne to R Smith, October 9, 1928, *NS234/191/13,* AOT.

39 Come to Tasmania Executive Committee, Come to Tasmania the Wonderland, (Hobart: Government Printer, 1929): 9, 31.

40 Simon Cubit, Nic Haygarth, "Paddy Hartnett: Tasmanian frontiersman" *THRA Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 57, No.2, (Aug 2010), 80.

the 'Melbourne walking club'.[41] They shared Du Cane hut (between the Pelion Plains and Lake St Clair) with them that night, before Nichols and his group headed north to Cradle Mountain.[42]

Then, in January 1931, the first unguided walkers, John Bellair and McRae, walked south along the route of the Overland Track, although afterwards they advised that no-one should 'take it on without a guide'.[43] They said that they had followed the 'Innes Track ... without much difficulty' and around Mount Pelion West where it was 'rather overgrown but otherwise quite definite'.[44] In the same month, a large group from the Hobart Walking Club took the trip, again guided by Nichols. However, nothing had been done to the track and, at the end of 1932, it was described as 'the over-grown scarcely discernible Innes Track of the early days' by another group from the Hobart Walking Club guided by Nichols.[45] They had found '[t]races of old cuttings and culverts' as they followed the track '[p]ushing, stumbling, crawling, slithering and sliding our way along, through tangled and soaking undergrowth'.[46] The track hadn't been cleaned out for 30 years, an eternity in this country, although cattlemen going to Lake Windermere may have done some work. Alice Brearley recorded the trip and, like most bushwalking articles that featured the Mole Creek Track, added a little

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41 Fred Smithies, Notes on a Trip to the Pelion and Du Cane Ranges, December 1929, *NS573/1/1/22 Correspondence of Frederick Smithies, Notes on a trip to the Pelion and Du Cane Ranges, Central Tasmania by F. Smithies, C.K. Stackhouse, A.Y. Weymouth, Christmas 1920*, AOT.

42 Ibid.;
Nichols knew the country from his snaring and may well have done the "overland route' himself well before this date.

43 John Bellair to Ronald Smith, February 8, 1931, *NS234/191/14 Letters Sent and Received by Ronald Smith and Other Papers Relating to Cradle Mountain*, 62, AOT.

44 Ibid.

45 Alice Brearley, Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair, Christmas-New Year, 1932-33, *Tasmanian Tramp* 2 (1933): 9.

46 Ibid.

history. She said that it was 'cut through these mountains to the mines at Rosebery', but incorrectly added that it was mainly to 'take cattle through to the coast'.[47]

Figure 6-7 Hobart Walking Club on Mole Creek Track at Mount Pelion West 1933 (Smithies, *NS573/2/1*, AOT)

47 Ibid.

Figure 6-8 Overland Track/Mole Creek Track at Mount Pelion West (Brown 2007)

The route from Cradle Mountain to Lake Clair was marked in late 1931, but the Mole Creek Track around the Forth River wasn't given any attention until 1935.[48] Over the years the Overland Track was improved, the route changed from time to time, huts were built, replaced and maintained. Today the journey from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair is one of the world's premier bushwalks and adventure tourist destination. It receives about 8,000-9,000 walkers a year.[49] These walkers are told by the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) that:

> When surveyed and cut by Edward Innes in the 1890s the section of track between Lake Windermere and Pelion Plains was being considered as part of a rail route to the West Coast. Though the railway did not go ahead through this area, poor miners, who could not afford the seas passage or train fare, walked the track to access the West Coast.[50]

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48 Clive Lord to Ronald Smith, March 16, 1931, *NS234/191/14,* AOT;
Fred Smithies to LD Connell, March 6, 1935, *NS234/191/14,* AOT.

49 Parks & Wildlife Service, Recreation - The Overland Track, http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/tracknotes/overland.html (Accessed July 6, 2005).

50 Parks and Wildlife Service, *Cradle Mountain- Lake St Clair National Park, Map and Notes*, (Information and Land Services, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, 2010).

Guide books, and there are quite a few, also mention the historic Innes Track and repeat many of the misconceptions of the past, even after Haygarth published a more accurate history. A more recent PWS guide has been assisted by input from Haygarth. That brings the most popular part of the Mole Creek Track, about 5 miles, to the current time, but the histories of the eastern and western ends need to be completed.

* * *

Bushwalking did not embrace the western end of the track, between Lake Will and Tullah, as strongly as the Overland Track and it is largely overgrown, in fact, impossible to find in some places. It had been last cleared out in 1939 after ET Emmett at the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau wrote to the Premier saying that 'it seems a pity that a once well-cut track should be over-grown when it transverse such magnificent scenery'.[51] He finished his letter with the statement that '[h]ikers are a section of the community worth catering for, and the numbers from the mainland are increasing each year'.[52] Work was done as Unemployment Relief.[53] One local bushwalker thought that the workers spent more time hunting than repairing the track.[54] Following this last significant work the track quickly became more overgrown, but some walkers attempted it, with varying degrees of success. Among them were Tim Hume and Geoff Lambert, who both continued the practice of adding historical detail to the reports of their walks.

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51 E Emmett to Premier, March 27, 1939, *PWD 24/1/18*, AOT.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Vic Crawn, personal correspondence, November 21, 1999.

Each article repeated, to some degree, the existing misconceptions about the origin, aims and achievements of the track, and often added to them. 'Tiger Tim' Hume, in 1956, stated the track was 'originally surveyed for a railway link between Tullah and Mole Creek'. This was a particularly persistent misconception.[55]

Lambert's report stands out, and not for the bushwalk, but for its historical preface. His article, which appeared in the bushwalking magazine, *Tasmanian Tramp,* in 1976, was much more than a story about a trip, because it was the best historical research into the track to that date.[56] It contained some good information, based on extensive research in the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, but it also introduced a number of mistakes into the historical record. These have subsequently become part of the broadly understood history of the track. There was, by this time, a number of well established errors, such as the false attribution of the construction of the track to Innes. Lambert, like Whitham and others, drew heavily on Innes' report, which has dominated the public record. Based on it and the newspaper record, he wove a plausible history.

Lambert stated that by 1898 the track had become heavily overgrown and was widened for pack horses. As mentioned in Chapter 5, he also contended that the 'Innes Track became a major access route for those miners' too poor for rail or sea travel to the West Coast.[57] He attributed the deviation from Granite Tor to

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55 "Tiger Tim", "The Valleys Beyond", *Skyline*, 1956, 15.

56 Geoff Lambert, "Innes Track – Liena to Rosebery", *Tasmanian Tramp*, 22, (1976): 55.

57 Ibid.

the Sophia River (found by Daniel Griffin, Richard Broomhall and Henry Coleman) to '[i]mpatient miners'.[58] He also stated that cattle and sheep were driven to the West Coast. As discussed in an earlier chapter, this was unlikely. He set out from Tullah, but didn't find the track until Granite Tor and then followed it east to Lake Will.[59] Hume, travelling in the opposite direction, had lost the track in the Brougham River valley.[60]

Lambert's account was taken up fulsomely by heritage professionals. He makes some interesting insights, but he also makes some mistakes and adds to the previous misconceptions. The public record was redressed by Haygarth and, within the bushwalking fraternity, Brown published a more accurate, but brief, history in the *Tasmanian Tramp* in 2002.[61]

* * *

Some of the eastern end of the Mole Creek Track, from Liena to the Pelion Plains, has been embraced by bushwalkers, but it is not nearly as popular as the Overland Track. For many years, it was the domain of cattlemen and snarers, although the occasional bushwalker did visit the route. In 1929, Smithies, Alf Weymouth and Carl Stackhouse made a tourist trip along the 'Innes Track' from Liena to the Pelion Plains.[62] At the Divide, in the middle of the February Plains, they were

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58 Ibid, 59.

59 Ibid, 63.

60 "Tiger Tim", "The Valleys Beyond", 15.

61 Haygarth, A View to Cradle;
Peter Brown, "Innes Track – Where and Why", *Tasmanian Tramp*, 34 (2002), 31-41.

62 Fred Smithies, Notes on a Trip to the Pelion and Du Cane Ranges, December 1929, *NS 573/1/22*, AOT.

struck, like many before them and after, by the 'wonderful views', and like Prichard and Beattie, listed off the mountains of the Cradle Mountain region that formed the panorama.[63] Between the February Plains and Lake Ayr, they found the 'Innes Track' to be 'perfectly easy as a grade, but difficult' because it was overgrown, blocked in many places by fallen timber and boggy.[64]

In 1935, when the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park (CM-LSCNP) was expanded. Part of the new eastern boundary between Lake Ayr and the northern end of Wurragarra Creek was defined by the Mole Creek Track.[65] It was marked with stone cairns and stakes mainly to show hunters the park boundary. Tom McCoy, one of the snarers, built a hut at Lake Ayr a few metres from the boundary.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Sketch Plan of Mineral Sections County of Lincoln, April 1940, Mineral Resources Tasmania.

Figure 6-9 1935 Marker Post for Edge of National Park, Lake Ayr (Brown 2007)

The next reported journey was by members of the Hobart Bushwalking Club in 1948. It was prefaced by a few comments taken from Innes' report to Parliament and then described the track in some detail.[66] One notable comment was that some of the route from Liena to the February Plains had been abandoned by cattlemen in favour of other tracks. However, between the February Plains and Lake Ayr the track was 'easy to follow being clearly marked and well graded'.[67] It would appear that this section was still being kept open by cattleman and snarers. Then in 1963, this small part of the Mole Creek Track was taken over as the modern Arm River Track.

John Manning of the Launceston Walking Club reported to the Cradle Mountain Park Board of his 'recent track re-location and marking of EC Innes [sic] 1897 track'.[68] Manning may have claimed to relocate the track, but it would have been known to local cattlemen and hunters. He was looking for a shorter route to the Pelion Plains, which he started from a road at Arm River and to 'Warragarra [sic] Creek where the old line of Innes track was marked with poles and cairns'.[69] He reported that the 'Innes track ... crosses Warragarra [sic] creek in a ford' and then '[t]his very well benched section on the track now commences to sidle gently down ... to the plains at the east end of Lake Ayr'.[70] The benching was

66 Nancy Shaw and Vic Crawn, The Innes Track, Liena to Rosebery, *Tasmanian Tramp*, 1948, 33.

67 Ibid.

68 John Manning to Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair Park Board, July 7, 1963, *AA577/1/3 General Correspondence Unregistered, Administration (1)*, AOT.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

'sometimes more than eight feet wide and still in the main very easy to follow'.[71] He was absolutely clear that Innes' party had made the track because he called it 'a tribute to the skill of old F.C. Innes [sic] for the track is nearly 70 years old'. There was no mention of the Public Works Department gangs.[72] He 'refrained from running any marked line other than that of the original track', because 'the old track [was] on the very best possible route'.[73]

A few changes have been made to this route over time but it has become established as the Arm River Track and receives thousands of walkers each year and, being within the CM–LSCNP, is maintained by the PWS.[74]

Modern bushwalking gave a new lease of life to the Mole Creek Track, albeit less than ten miles of its original length. The problems with the heavy traffic along these sections tested the track, and, by contrast, where it was not used and maintained, it has become heavily overgrown. Bushwalkers also abandoned the old name of the Mole Creek Track and it has been called the Innes Track for about 80 of its 110 years. Haygarth recognised the inaccuracies in the historical record in 1998, but this has not been taken up by many subsequent authors and the name, and the false history, remains dominant.[75]

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71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.
The track was marked in the fashion of the day with '[s]ome 75 red and white painted tins ... together with painted can lids and stakes and blazes'.

74 Parks and Wildlife Service, Overland Track, Draft Recreation Zone Plan 2006, 16, http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/file.aspx?id=6789 (accessed July 16, 2007).

75 Haygarth, A View to Cradle, 75;
John Siseman and John Chapman, *Cradle Mountain National Park*, 2nd ed. (Northcote: Brunswick, 1984): 58
Warwick Sprawson, *The Overland Track* (Red Dog Books, Fitzroy, 2011).

CHAPTER 7 MANAGERS

The Mole Creek Track has been fortunate in that much of it is protected from damage or destruction because it passes through the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park (CM–LSCNP) and the Granite Tor Conservation Area, and that Forestry Tasmania generally protect the sections within their land tenure. However, there are significant problems, such as a persistent misunderstanding of its history, an incomplete understanding of its cultural heritage values and inadequate practical protection, within and outside of the National Park. But many other tracks suffer much greater barriers to their recognition and protection.

A brief introduction to the recognition and protection of cultural heritage in Australia is needed. Heritage features can be recognised through international, Commonwealth and state-based laws. The range of relevant laws, practices and guidelines that could relate to the cultural heritage values of the Mole Creek Track is wide and almost bewildering.

Australia is a party to the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was drafted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). This requires Australia to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations cultural heritage sites that are 'outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view'.[1] Commonly called World Heritage listing, this has been conferred on the 'Tasmanian Wilderness' which includes the CM-

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1 Australian Treaty Series, Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1975/47.html (accessed 2 October 2011).

LSCNP. The protection of World Heritage sites is though Australia legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). This is administered in this area through the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). The listing for the Tasmanian Wilderness makes no mention of the Mole Creek Track and cursory mention of European cultural heritage.

The EPBC Act also provides for the protection of cultural heritage in Australia if it is of 'outstanding heritage value to the nation'. The Tasmanian Wilderness, as defied by its World Heritage listing is also inscribed on the National Heritage List. Again there is no specific mention of the Mole Creek Track (or Innes Track) or values that it broadly encapsulates. There is also an inventory, called the Register of the National Estate (RNE), which is a relic of earlier Commonwealth legislation, but affords no protection. Its 'only role will be as a publicly available archive'.[2]

The Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) also impacts on heritage protection. It is an agreement between the Commonwealth and states 'to balance the full range of environmental, social, economic and heritage values that forests can provide for current and future generations'.[3] As part of this process the evaluation of the 'environment, heritage, social and economic uses and values of the forests' by scientific evaluations called Comprehensive Regional Assessments (CRAs). The heritage values were determined under the, now superseded, *Australian Heritage*

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2 EDO Facts Sheets, Commonwealth Heritage Protection Law, http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/factsh/fs03_2.php, (accessed 2 Oct. 11 2011).

3 Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, RFAs Why? http://www.daff.gov.au/rfa/about/why , (accessed 2 October 2011).

Commission Act 1975, and nominated for the RNE if they satisfied the requirements of the act.[4]

Tasmanian legislation can protect cultural heritage like the Mole Creek Track through the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act.* The Act 'is to promote the identification, assessment, protection and conservation of places having historic cultural heritage significance and to establish the Tasmanian Heritage Council'.[5] They maintain the listing of the protected sites as the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

Other state legislation protection or custodianship is given through Forestry Tasmania and PWS. Forestry Tasmania 'has the statutory responsibility for the management of 1.5 million hectares of State forest land'.[6] It is governed by the *Forest Practices Act 1985*, part of which requires it to conserve cultural heritage values.[7] Part of the Mole Creek Track passes through land managed by Forestry Tasmania.

The PWS also manages land under its control, such as the CM-LSCNP, under the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* which requires that nominated areas are managed to 'conserve sites or areas of cultural significance'

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4 Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Commonwealth Environment and Heritage Obligations and Assessments http://www.daff.gov.au/rfa/about/process/obligations, (accessed 2 October 2011).

5 Tasmanian Heritage Council, Historic Cultural Heritage Act, http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au/hist_act.html (accessed 2 October 2011).

6 Forestry Tasmania, Our Vision, http://www.forestrytas.com.au/about-us/our-vision (accessed 2 October 2011)

7 Forest Practices Board, Tasmania, *Forest Practices Code*, (Hobart: Forest Practices Board, 2000)

and 'to encourage education based on the purposes of reservation and the natural or cultural values'.[8] PWS maintains a register of historic places under its control, the Tasmanian Heritage Places Inventory.

Tracks, as cultural heritage, are under-appreciated to the point of being actively ignored by their users, managers, heritage professionals and government agencies. The proof of this is simple and unarguable. None are listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register and other heritage registers hold an insignificant number. Tracks, and even a well-known track like the Mole Creek Track, have more barriers to their effective protection than any Georgian mansion, or other monumental edifice, nominated for registration. Each barrier must be overcome before a track is protected adequately, and if it fails to overcome any one it will not be protected.

Without an accessible historical record to show that a track existed, it effectively does not exist.[9] This is one issue that many tracks suffer on the path to effective protection that does not afflict the Mole Creek Track. In the nineteenth century, it was a common problem for tracks to be cut without being recorded or mapped, and they were then lost. This prompted the Surveyor General to implement a system of track marking and reporting that was highly controlled to ensure that the work was not wasted.[10] EG Innes demonstrated the best and worst of this

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8 Tasmanian Legislation, Tasmania's Consolidated Legislation Online, National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002,

9 J Ramsay and M Truscott, Tracking Through Australian Forests, in Australian ICOMOS 'Making Tracks' Conference, Alice Springs, May 2001. http://www.iconomos.org./australia (accessed April 10, 2005), 1

10 Chris Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania* (Devonport: Taswegia, 1989): 237.

practice. He is a perfect example of how a track should be laid out, and importantly, thoroughly reported. It was also marked well in the bush. On the other hand, Innes also reported, during a journey into South-Western Tasmania in mid 1896, that he found a track cut by Cullen and Cawthorne, but his was the only mention of this track and where it went.[11] If the Government bureaucracy could not keep account of all the tracks they commissioned, then there was little hope for tracks formed by private groups. Bush-tracks could be quickly cut by almost any prospector, explorer or bushman and they may not have the need or inclination to bring it to public attention. Clearly more substantial linear constructions such as railway lines, water races and roads would be more likely to be recorded because they required substantial funding, effort and were, in themselves, more robust structures.

The real relative abundance of tracks in Australian forests was demonstrated by an audit under the RFA. It found that 10% of all cultural heritage features were tracks, that is 130 of 1365 cultural heritage features.[12] This 10% represents an average of the audits of a number of forests, some having a much higher proportion. This figure should be compared with the insignificant proportion of heritage protected tracks. This is the first barrier, being forgotten, and being known but unmapped is the next barrier. That is if a track is known to exist but cannot be located, it is still equally unprotected.[13]

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11 EG Innes, "Route to the West: Report of Mr Surveyor Innes upon the Country between Mount Humboldt and the Head of the Navigable Water upon the Gordon", *Journals and printed papers of the Parliament of Tasmania (JPPP),* Report 74, 1897, (August 25, 1896).

78 Ramsay and Truscott, Tracking Through Australian Forests.

13 Ibid.

A good indication of the size of the issue of unmapped tracks is that about 52 tracks were made by the PWD in and around the West Coast between 1869 and 1909. It would be difficult to imagine that more than 10 have been mapped to any degree. Even for the well-known Mole Creek Track only 9 ½ miles had been accurately identified, less than 13% of the total length of the track.[14] And this represents observations from a guide book for the Overland Track and the Arm River Track, rather than dedicated field work. The work undertaken for this thesis has increased the known sections of the Mole Creek Track from 9 ½ to 51 ½ miles.

The problem for anyone trying to map tracks is that nature, and later development, are very effective in removing all but the most obvious traces. This highlights a problem for heritage agencies or managers of land containing tracks. Effort is required to find and map tracks and this is generally beyond their resources. With little in the way of dedicated heritage resources, field staff are focussed on management of assets, and agencies, such as the PWS have little time for these less pressing tasks. Although they do give some support to volunteers who do have the time, and some staff hunt out cultural heritage resources in their own time. But even if track is known and mapped, it must still have significant historical value to justify its protection. This and the next steps to heritage protection are in the hands of the heritage professionals. An identified track, with a mapped location, must be examined for its heritage significance to determine whether it has values worthy of protection. This has a number of systematic biases.

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14 A total of 15 ½ miles were said to be known but some was incorrectly identified. The total length of the track was also incorrectly listed as 98 miles, not the actual 75 ½ miles.

The common approach of heritage practitioners to assess cultural heritage values and significance is defined in the Burra Charter (Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance), which has a methodology to determine whether a physical piece of history is significant and to what degree.[15] This methodology will be applied to the Mole Creek Track later to summarise its specific cultural heritage values, but suffice to say that the RNE and the RFA identified one heritage value for the track, whereas six were found by this author as a result of the research for this thesis.

A problem in understanding the heritage values of tracks is a systematic bias. The simple fact is that tracks appear unexceptional and are not highly regarded. Many people regard them as a means to an end, which may be getting to some scenic or remote location. Although many in the bushwalking community, as the articles in bushwalking magazines show, acknowledge the history of some tracks. And Lambert did go well beyond that for his article. Tracks aren't grand or imposing and they are also cultural heritage made by humble rural people, which is not as highly regarded or recognised as it should be. It seems that heritage registers are dominated by substantial public and private constructions and there is little space for smaller stories that tell more of the detail of daily life.

Another problem for tracks, and many other heritage items without an existing well-known and well researched history, is the lack of resources for those who prepare the submissions for heritage listing. The Mole Creek Track provides a good example. It, albeit called the Innes Track, has been accepted onto the RNE,

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15 P Marquis-Kyle and M Walker, *The illustrated Burra Charter,* (Australian Heritage Commission, 1996).

as a result of the RFA survey of the area. [16] There was no original work in the entry on the RNE, which was copied directly from the RFA review (without acknowledgement) and lists the same three references. The RFA entry, in its turn, took its information from one document, a review of historic structures in the CM-LSCNP conducted in 1991 by the PWS. This PWS review does refer to the three sources listed in the other entries, but most of the information was taken from Lambert's article.[17]

The errors in the listing of the RNE are many and for the sake of completeness are listed and corrected here. The information to support the comments has already been presented earlier in the thesis.

- The name given is Innes Track – should be the Mole Creek Track
- The track is 157 kilometres long (98 miles) - it is 121 kilometres (75 ½ miles) long
- The track was surveyed and cut by a team led by EG Innes – it was surveyed by EG Innes' party and cut by PWD gangs
- The track was originally planned as a railway – it was to be a track or road
- The track became an alternative for the expensive sea voyage to the West Coast – there is no evidence of this

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16 Australian Heritage Database, "Place Details, Innes Track, Overland Trk, Cradle Valley, TAS", http://www.deh.gov.au/cgi-bin,ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=103781 (accessed May 17 2005);
M Pearson, & D Young, *Regional Forest Agreement, Cultural Heritage Identification and Assessment Stages 2 &3, Study 4, Transportation Routes*, (1996), 36-40.

17 D Bannear, *Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park; Historic Structures Inventory Project Stage II*, (Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, March 1991), 59 – 62;
Lambert, "Innes Track – Liena to Rosebery".

- It was used for droving to the West Coast – no evidence for this and there is indirect evidence that it was not
- Between Pelion Hut and Lake Will it is incorporated into the Overland Track – only the section between Pine Forest Moor and Pelion Hut
- Track from Overland Track to Lake Will may follow Innes' route – it reached Lake Will by a route further south

Continuing with the barriers to protection, if a track is considered to have significance, it enters the realm of assessment by the relevant government agency. Assessment and listing on a heritage register is no sure thing for a number of reasons including difficulties with long linear features. The listing of the Innes Track (Mole Creek Track) on the RNE was a considerable achievement if one considers the extraordinary under-representation of tracks. The Australian Heritage Places Inventory, which includes most Australian heritage registers, contains 63 tracks in the 28,072 entries, that is 0.2% or 50 times less than the RFA audits mentioned earlier.[18] However, the Tasmania Heritage Register is far more deficient. It contains no tracks in its 5261 listings.[19] The nomination of the Mole Creek Track for listing in the Tasmanian Heritage Register made in 2000 has not been formally evaluated.[20] Within the Tasmania Heritage Council there are two significant problems that have caused this delay.

One is that tracks are long, may be under multiple ownership and may be in varying stages of decay. They are difficult to categorise in contrast with the

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18 Australian Heritage Places Inventory, www.heritage.gov.au/aphi/index.html (accessed May 20, 2005).

19 Ibid.

20 P. Brown to Tasmanian Heritage Commission, personal correspondence, December 12, 2000.

normal small and well defined heritage properties. In this context Ramsay and Truscott have suggested regarding tracks as 'thin, long cultural landscapes', as this provides a better framework to manage their heritage values.[21]

The other is a general delay to processing heritage nominations. The backlog of places to be assessed for the Tasmanian Heritage Register was said to take 40 to 50 years to clear at the current levels of resourcing.[22] The long delay of the nomination of the Mole Creek Track is not unique, as eight mountain huts have been nominated, one more than ten years ago, and these have also not been assessed.[23] This last step of nomination and assessment for the Mole Creek Track may take another 30 to 40 years to complete.

Fortunately, the track has piecemeal protection from some of the landowners. It runs through land controlled by PWS and Forestry Tasmania. Others, such as Minerals & Metals Group at Rosebery, land owners at Tullah are unaware of its presence. Two sections were submerged by Hydro Tasmania in Lakes Mackintosh and Rosebery.

Listing does give protection, on paper, under the relevant government Act, but in the unlikely event that the track is listed, the practical implementation of the protection of the track becomes the responsibility of the agency holding the land that it crosses. The historic significance of the Mole Creek Track has been recognised by the PWS in that it has been identified on their Tasmania Heritage

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21 Ramsay and Truscott, Tracking Through Australian Forests.

22 Ibid.

23 Michael Lynch, Heritage Council, ABC 7:30 Report, http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2010/s3092200.htm (accessed January 7, 2011).

Places Inventory. It has also been recognised by Forestry Tasmania in its plans for harvesting Mersey – Forth area. They harvest timber on some of the line of the track between Gads Hill and the February Plains and are required to protect cultural heritage values under the Forest Practices Code.[24] It is aware of the track and its importance, which has resulted in active protection of sections of the track during forestry operations, but also the mistaken destruction of one section.

For the PWS their current policy for unused sections of the Mole Creek Track is informally called "benign neglect". For the sections that are in use, there appears to be no policy that recognises their heritage value. The PWS has extensive management plans for the CM–LSCNP and general management plans for tracks. However, these are about the day to day management of walking tracks without any consideration of their heritage values. The result is both heavy wear due to high visitor numbers and inappropriate and damaging maintenance has destroyed some of the heritage value. The Arm River Track is an example of this. After being maintained by volunteers and now by PWS personnel, the benched section of sidling track from Wurragarra Creek to Lake Ayr has been extensively changed. The drainage has not been maintained and large rocks and cross drains have been cut into the track, but it is heavily rutted from water and walkers. The only section that could be found that would have some remaining well-preserved archaeological values for the excavations, conducted for this thesis, was about 30 feet long where walkers and the modern track had detoured around two fallen trees.

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24 Forest Practices Authority, Forest Practices Code 2000, 70, http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/Admin/FPC2000_Complete.pdf (accessed February 23, 2011).

To further illustrate the lack of an understanding of the cultural heritage values of this track, maintenance was conducted in 2007 on a section of the Arm River Track without a formal review of its values and their management. This can be contrasted with the Reserve Activity Assessment that the author had to undertake to conduct a series of small excavations for this thesis. The review by a number of Government departments took about 18 months to give approval. This assessment process is specifically required for a 'site of known or likely historical or archaeological importance'.[25] However, maintenance work was being conducted without a Reserve Activity Assessment at the same time as the author's assessment was being reviewed.

Fortunately the problem of sensitive maintenance of heritage tracks is not a problem isolated to Tasmania and a methodology has been developed in New Zealand by the Department of Conservation. This approach involves a systematic survey of a track to determine its heritage values. Called the Historic Track Baseline Inspection Process, the historic context of the track is first determined and then the track is walked and its structure and preservation are recorded.[26] This process is similar to conducting a Conservation Plan for a building.[27] For a building, the historic significance of each part would be determined, as many have been modified over time and not all parts have the same historical importance. Like a building, conservation and management plans are developed,

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25 PWS Reserve Activity Assessment, Version 10, December 2006 (internal PWS document).

26 Jackie Breen and Mark Nelson, 'A Guide to Historic Track Baseline Inspections', Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*, New Zealand, December 2006.

27 James Semple Kerr, *The Conservation Plan, A Guide to the Preparation of Conservation Plans for Places of European Cultural Significance*, 4th ed, (Sydney, The National Trust of Australia – NSW, 1996).

which will govern the degree and type of conservation that is appropriate to each part of the track. This has been applied to a series of New Zealand tracks.[28]

This approach has direct application to the Mole Creek Track, particularly the sections under the most threat, which are on the Overland and Arm River Tracks. This should in time be applied to the rest of the Mole Creek Track and other tracks with significant cultural heritage values under PWS control.

For the Mole Creek Track many of the barriers to effective protection have been overcome as part of this thesis. The track was known, and it has now been largely mapped, and its historical importance determined. It has been nominated for the Tasmanian Heritage Register and awaits registration. The author has been providing information to PWS and Forestry Tasmania about the location of the track and significant artefacts that will assist in their protection.

The historical significance of the Mole Creek Track can be summarised, using the criteria developed under the Burra Charter and used by most heritage agencies. This relies on earlier parts of this thesis for detail. The RNE list one criterion, which is A4 in that the track is associated with a range of themes integral to the development of western Tasmania.[29] The value is:

> The Innes Track is associated with a range of themes integral to the development of western Tasmania. These include the development of railway routes; nineteenth century surveying and track building; the opening up of the west of Tasmania due to the burgeoning of local mining activities; mining development in the Barn Bluff and Mount Pelion areas; hunting for native animals.[30]

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28 For example, Jackie Breen, Copland Track Heritage Assessment and Baseline Inspection Report, Department of Conservation, *Te Papa Atawhai*, New Zealand, July 2007.

29 Australian Heritage Database, "Place Details, Innes Track, Overland Trk, Cradle Valley, TAS".

30 Ibid.

This statement is largely supported by this thesis. However, the development of railway routes was peripheral to the Mole Creek Track and is not significant enough to apply here, but it was part of the overall agitation in the 'Railway Wars', which was significant in the history of Tasmania. What is missing from this statement is the importance in relation to parochial agitation for access to the mineral fields of the West Coast and continued parochial conflict within Tasmania and its importance in the development of wilderness tourism, largely in relation to the Overland Track. Both of these aspects were discussed in earlier.

The Mole Creek Track satisfies five other criteria used by the RNE. One is Criterion B.2, which is defined as 'its importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest'.[31] This is largely an extension of Criteria A.4 because many of the activities mentioned there are no longer practiced and in danger of being lost. These are cattle grazing, hunting and prospecting. The track has been the route that many of people practicing these activities followed. Small herds do still graze on the Borradaile Plains but the long history of grazing at Gads Hill, February Plains, Pelion Plains and Lake Windermere has stopped. Snaring and hunting was conducted along all of the track from its earliest days before the proclamation of wildlife protection in the CM–LSCNP.[32] The people of Tullah, and the other small towns near this country, Lorinna and Liena, no longer snare, but a few hunt in the more accessible areas. Prospecting was done along much of the track with the last work in the

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31 Australian Heritage Commission, Criteria for the Register of the National Estate, http://www.ahc.gov.au/register/furtherinfo/criteria.html (accessed June 20, 2005).

32 Haygarth, A *View to Cradle*, 142 – 152.

1980s. Prospectors' camps and workings from the 1890s to the 1980s are still visible. As is a track cutters' camp at Frog Flats.

The Mole Creek Track itself is a largely intact example of a nineteenth century track. Most other tracks have been destroyed by later human activity, such as road construction, or by the forces of nature; erosion and regrowth. The Linda Track is one example of a well made track that is now largely destroyed, in its case by the Lyell Highway. Thus a continuous identifiable track is now very rare. It has been put that rarity is often ascribed, but it is generally due to limited knowledge than truly rare artefacts.[33] In this case, the rarity is real. Within the context of the development of direct routes with the West Coast, the Mole Creek Track is indeed rare. In the decade of agitation for the direct routes, the 1890s, only one other substantial track, the Tyenna-Gordon Track, was formed and it has been largely destroyed.

Also part of Criteria B.2 is the track is a very strong demonstration of the work of nineteenth century track-cutters. The work of this thesis has shown that a lot about their work and life can be seen from how the track was made.

Another important criterion is C.2. It is defined as; '[i]mportance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the human occupation of Australia'.[34] The Mole Creek Track satisfies this criterion as it can, and has in this thesis, provided significant information on the people who cut the track and, to a much more limited degree, on the people who used it to access the mineral fields, high

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33 M Pearson & B McGowan, *Mining Heritage Places Assessment Manual* (Canberra: Australian Council of National Trusts & the Australian Heritage Commission, 2000): 23.

34 Australian Heritage Commission, Criteria for the Register of the National Estate.

pastures and hunting grounds. The life of the track-cutters, and their identity, has emerged from this thesis.

Criteria D.2 is 'importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment'.[35] This is also known as scientific cultural heritage significance. The information provided in an earlier chapter about both the 'art of laying out' and the 'science of track-making' was drawn from the physical and historical records for the Mole Creek Track and represents new knowledge about important, and now lost, activities. The RFA review had expected that some of the 'section of the Innes Track between Wurragarra Creek and Lake Ayr' required 'inspection to determine if it is a good demonstration of track cutting methods'.[36] That inspection was started by the author and what it revealed was far beyond my original expectations. Combining the archaeology with primary information by observers such as Prichard and from specifications for other tracks has provided great insight into the science of track-making.

Criterion E.1 is defined as '[i]mportance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community'. Aesthetic cultural heritage significance is a criterion in Commonwealth legislation but it is not captured within the wording of the Tasmanian legislation, but it does seem to be well understood. [37] Aesthetic value is the only explanation for the

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35 Ibid.

36 Pearson & Young, Regional Forestry Agreement, 36-40

37 Australian Heritage Commission, Criteria for the Register of the National Estate.

very high proportion of urban Georgian architecture on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

The Mole Creek Track has a high degree of aesthetic value in its unity and sensitivity to the landscape through which it passes. It combines the 'romance of ruins' with a powerful experience of remoteness and natural beauty.[38] The evocation of the past, in a nostalgic way, is made strong by the combination of factors. Firstly, there is a clear patina of age evident in the moss-tipped stakes, overgrown benching and vague alpine ruts. The connection with this distant past is reinforced by the remoteness of the locations in which they are found. And by a landscape which remains in the same relatively untouched state as the time of the formation of the route. The association of the modern observer with the pioneers is further reinforced as the modern visitor must also be self-sufficient and walk with their, albeit lightweight, swag on their back.

Criterion G.1 which is '[i]mportance as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural educational or social associations' has particular application.[39] One of the consistent parts of the history of the Mole Creek Track is that its surveying resulted in the discovery of minerals at Mount Farrell and consequently led to the development of the township of Tullah. It is a matter of record that Josiah Innes discovered minerals at Mount Farrell in 1897 while he and William Aylett were working for his brother EG Innes on the survey of the Mole Creek Track. The importance of the track to the people of Tullah is borne out by their celebration, in 1997, of the 100

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38 Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*. (New York/Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004).

39 Australian Heritage Commission, Criteria for the Register of the National Estate.

years since the discovery of mineral body by Josiah Innes.[40] And this thesis has also shown that the Mole Creek Track was important in the early life of the mines for supplies and ore to market.

The Mole Creek Track stands as an example of the poor appreciation and poor heritage protection of these unique cultural heritage artefacts, tracks. So many factors stand between a track and its conservation. They are under recognised, under appreciated, difficult to locate, too long and poorly understood. Then the bureaucratic process is poorly resourced, slowing their assessment to a stand still.

The Mole Creek Track is well known, now well understood, its significance identified and it falls within an area where protection is afforded by National Parks and Forestry legislation. This is fortunate considering the slowness and lack of appreciation under the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act.*

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40 Tullah Progress Association, http://www.tullah.tco.asn.au/tullah/ (accessed March 2002); The generally held historical account appears, from superficial examination, to be far too simple and the process of discovery, prospecting, development and success has many turns, not the least being the apparent writing of William Aylett out of the discovery and proving of the deposit.

Figure 7-1 Cradle Mountain, Barn Bluff and Lake Will from Mount Inglis (Brown 2004)

CONCLUSION

The fundamental task of this thesis was to present an accurate history of the Mole Creek Track, which would correct, naturally, many of the errors that have crept into its currently understood history. It has gone far beyond that. Along the way the lost arts of 'laying out' and track making have been revealed. There was much more to these skills than attributed to any Tasmanian surveyor or track cutters. The track cutters have received some of the recognition that they deserve and their character has been examined.

The history of the Mole Creek Track was also brought into the twenty-first century. This means both how it serves thousands of walkers and tourists each year and also how heritage protection, well deserved, has failed to recognise it, other than where it falls accidentally under the custodianship of the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) and Forestry Tasmania.

This research has revealed a rich history and many new aspects. There is new insight into the hot-house of the 'railway wars' of the 1890s, and the poor cousins in these wars, the tracks. Two pack tracks were built to join both Hobart and Launceston to the West Coast and both were unnecessary sops to vocal parochial supporters. The Tyenna – Gordon Track was singularly unsuccessful and poorly executed. Unfortunately, it had no Dan Griffin to point out its folly.

As far as the Mole Creek Track is concerned, this work establishes that it was a track. This is an achievement because the most persistent part of the commonly understood history is that it was a railway survey. Innes had to contend with this

same misunderstanding in 1897 when 'an impression, has got abroad that I [Innes] was sent to mark a railway line, that nothing of the sort was mentioned or intended'.[1] Innes was instructed to find a route for a 'track or road' and not a railway, which Innes pointed out, would have been a very different proposition. The simple fact was that the grades of the track, up to 1 in 10 were too steep for a railway or tramway which needs grades of less than 1 in 40.

The usefulness of the Mole Creek Track is a matter for discussion, largely because there were so many claims made to support its construction. However, the most significant claim, its *raison d'être*, was for a direct route between the agricultural and commercial parts of Northern Tasmania and the rich mines of the West Coast. The fact that the track had become largely ignored by its northern promoters before it was completed, showed that it failed at this. The two reasons for its failure were the construction of the Emu Bay Railway and the failure of the Rosebery mineral field in mid 1898.

The corollary of the construction of tracks was that they opened up country for mineral prospecting and agricultural use, and this was claimed for the Mole Creek Track. It certainly did this with the Barn Bluff Copper Mines, the Lake Windermere gold and silver mineral field and the Bluff River Tin Mine. The problem with these was that none were rich enough to be viable, regardless of the pronouncements of their persistent promoters like EC James. But it is also a fact that not every mineral discovery will be rich enough to become a successful mine, many are doomed to fail and that is the lottery of prospecting. However, the one discovery that justifies the track was the Mount Farrell mine. It was not the

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1 Innes, "Correspondence, Mole Creek Track to Mount Black", *Launceston Examiner,* August 18, 1897.

'biggest show of metal ever discovered' but it was a reliable and long lived little mine that gave a living to many people for many years and the town of Tullah exists, and still survives today, because of the earlier richness of its mines.[2] And despite Innes' comments it did not open up agricultural land.

One of the almost off-hand claims for the Mole Creek Track was that it would open the country for tourists. It did captivate the early urban visitors, government men and tourism boosters, but it got off to a slow start. It was not until the 1920s that bushwalkers ended 'the dark ages' of the Cradle Mountain region.[3] They brought with them a fresh perspective. They escaped from the cities by car, motorbike and train and waxed poetic about this country. When it came to the history of the country, they turned to the written word, which they knew and trusted. For them the compelling report of District Surveyor Edward George Innes said all that needed being said about the Mole Creek Track, and they changed its name and its history. Over time more facts, half facts and wild speculations have accreted to the received wisdom of, what became exclusively, the Innes Track.

And there are the track-cutters, they were written out of history for more than 70 years. Even their recognition more than ten years ago has not gained traction widely enough to stop the repetition of the old myths. In general, the rural poor, bush-farmers and alike, have received some recognition, but remote bush-workers have been relegated largely to folksy histories that don't acknowledge them as a

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2 EC James reported in Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle; A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country* (1998), 81.

3 Ronald Smith, "Exploration of Cradle Mountain, Very Little Known of Climbers of the Past", *Advocate*, March 16, 1937.

significant group of people, working beyond the edge of civilisation. Luckily there are some fine histories that are redressing this omission, but it will take time for it to reach the general literature.

The track-cutters emerge from the gloom of a long ignored place in history and chief amongst them are the overseers Richard Broomhall, Henry Coleman, Robert Ellis, King and Forsyth. The historical record has not captured many of the men of the work gangs, because only a few of their names remain. However, their most eloquent testament, the track, does tell a great deal about them. Using the technique developed by Karskens, the archaeology speaks for them and we get some idea of the groups of men that worked at each end of the track. The sturdy bush-farmers from Chudleigh and Mole Creek worked hard on casual government jobs to augment the incomes from their small farms. They were used to hard work in the outdoors. Clearing the land taught them about using an axe, understanding timber, hunting for food and furs and also living in the bad weather on simple food. Richard Broomhall was their diligent overseer.

The western end of the track is a different story. Here the men wanted well-paid work in the mines or on the railway. They also wanted to be near, what passed for, creature comforts in the bush towns. The last resort was working on tracks, less well paid, subject to bad weather and in tents nowhere near a pub or a store. When they could find a job elsewhere they moved on. They worked slowly, and expensively, and it would seem didn't even build the track to the correct width.

However, the snarers, prospectors, cattlemen and bush-workers have not received the attention they deserve here. William Aylett grew into old age working along

this track. He was there at the beginning before Russell, at Russell's side, the packer, come guide, for Innes and the relentless promoter of the Bluff River Tin Mine and track maintainer *par excellence*. Did he, or his fellow bush-workers, Bert Nichols, Paddy Hartnett, Tommy McCoy, the Parsons brothers, the cattlemen and prospectors, and the later generations, think much of the Mole Creek Track? Well probably, it gave them work to make it, made access to their remote workplaces easier and they found work guiding and supporting the urban recreational users who came to sightsee. They had to turn their hands to what ever brought in money to support their meagre farms. But they lived without it before it was built and, while it would have been convenient, and augmented their incomes, it wasn't going to make them wealthy.

This thesis details the two staged development of pack tracks, with 'laying out' being done by a surveyor and then the construction by Public Works Department (PWD) gangs. The dominance of the history by EG Innes and a party of four men making the track is as surprising as it is untenable. Up to 130 men, and on average 50, worked to make the track over two summers, a job ascribed to Innes' group over seven months. But Innes did do a good job of surveying the route and should be appreciated for that.

The 'art of laying out' a track has not been examined in detail before. There was no text book or detailed instructions to the Innes on how to find the way from one place to another past mountains, rivers and lakes. However, by examining the artefact within the landscape it is possible to see some consistent behaviours about the placement of the route and speculate on what were the fundamentals of this unwritten art.

The way the track was made showed a sophistication that I had not suspected until the accumulation of the years was removed from the track surface during the excavations. It was much more than a flattened earth path, because it had drainage and surface hardening to give it a long life. A pack track should be thought of more as a narrow unsealed road, rather than a bush track. And that is also because its construction specifications were derived from roads. The list of specifications for clearing, grubbing, culverts, corduroy and benching is much too long and detailed to go into here, but they do indicate that there was a successful formula that the overseers had to communicate to their gangs. Since most pack tracks are not thought of as heritage it is not surprising that the details of their construction have not been examined before.

One of the problems for tracks as heritage is knowing that they exist, but during this research it has become clear that some archival records capture many of the tracks that have disappeared from history. If government money was spent on making a track it would appear, in some detail, in the many files of Public Works Expenditure Acts. Even those tracks funded under general titles of "Tracks for Mineral Exploration", or similar, often have a presence in these files held at the Archives Office of Tasmania. But better still, at least for finding tracks, is the Public Works Department (PWD) Ledgers of Expenditure. Here every payment made for any piece of Public Works was recorded. After much of the communications has been discarded, the accountants' ledgers still record the details of how the money was spent.

It could be said that tracks are ephemeral and without regular maintenance they are doomed to a short existence. Where nature did not have open country before, it will quickly reclaim what it has lost. The regular demands for repair of the track between Tullah and the Bluff River Tin Mines by William Aylett, demonstrate not only Aylett's business sense, but that even without much use a track can become blocked. A single heavy snow fall, or a single storm, will fell trees and bushes across a track. One fallen mature gum will be a barrier that can only be avoided by a long detour. Without storms or snow, which are regular enough, regrowth by bauera and button-grass will be guaranteed to take over a track within a few years. The author has found marking tapes placed just two or three years earlier along an open section of track that had become enclosed deep in a thicket of bauera. And then there is decay of the timbers of the markers, corduroy, culverts and bridges. It is slower but just as unstoppable.

The outcome is that tracks, no matter how significant, can be quickly lost, which makes their protection difficult if it is not known where they are. However, the work for this thesis has proved that with persistence, and a range of tools such as old maps, mineral surveys, aerial photographs, descriptions and a lot of dogged field work, that they can be found. The signs are sometimes subtle, an old blaze on a tree, a rut into the ground, a change in the type of vegetation or rocks in a row, but there are generally signs of some kind. Where the track has been taken over by later roads, all is not lost. It still reveals the route, the grade of the route and the decisions made by the surveyor and the track-cutters to take the track through the landscape.

Heritage protection of tracks in general, and the Mole Creek Track in particular, has been shown to be problematic. Barriers in documentation, in systematic bias and in bureaucracy stand between tracks and their conservation under heritage legislation. Our heritage lists are overwhelmed by grand colonial architecture, often without any significant historical significance other than aesthetic appeal. Little wonder that more humble structures don't receive the same attention. And it takes much more effort to look at a track and see it as a significant piece of cultural heritage rather than a path for a nice walk in the country. Tracks are difficult to access, difficult to understand and don't intimidate like grand buildings. But the histories and stories that this track has revealed play across the state of Tasmania and span more than 110 years. This is hardly a humble path.

The excavations undertaken for this track, combined with historical photographs and historical records have revealed much more than any of these single sources would have. This technique, historical archaeology, was extremely powerful.

The persistent use of the title "Innes Track" is problematic. The name "Mole Creek Track' is more appropriate, but the history of the name is complicated. In the earlier development of a track, before it has a fixed route, it could be described a number of ways. The *Launceston Examiner* first referred to it as a 'direct route from Launceston to the West Coast mineral fields' and then it briefly became more concrete as 'Russell's Track' after Con Russell, who had proposed a route from Launceston to Dundas near Zeehan. Innes was instructed by the PWD to examine a track from 'Mole Creek District to the vicinity of Mt Reid [sic]' which he then described more fulsomely, and precisely, as 'Liena (Mersey

Bridge) to Rosebery (Stitt Bridge)'.[4] The *Launceston Examiner* and the PWD did not adopt Innes' formal name and referred to the route as variously the track to Mount Reid, the Mole Creek-Mount Black route and finally as the Mole Creek Track.[5] During the construction of the track the PWD normally used the term Mole Creek Track, but did also to refer to it as the Innes Track, often to differentiate the line that Innes had surveyed, and marked, from the line that the track-cutters had made.[6] The Public Works Execution Act that funded it called it the track from 'Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge', although Mole Creek, was miles from the start of the track.[7] The PWD shortened it to the Mole Creek Track, which was the name that stuck, with variations, for about 30 years.

There was a naming convention for tracks, which applied only to government maps where cartographers used the explorer's name rather than the places that it linked. The Sketch Map of the West Coast was marked many tracks including 'Track by E.A. Counsel 1878', 'Marriott's Track', 'Track by T.B. Moore 1903', 'Ewart's Track 1900' and 'Track Rosebery to Liena marked EG Innes 1896'.[8] With the Mole Creek Track, the name Innes Track first appeared on maps from mid 1898 when local district surveyors charted mineral leases in the Lake Windermere area, and all subsequent maps and county charts used this name.[9]

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4 Secretary Public Works to EG Innes, October 16, 1896, *PWD 2/124/145 Letterbooks of General Outward Correspondence*, AOT;
EG Innes, "Report of Track from Mole Creek to Mount Black".

5 "Mole Creek Mount Black Routes", *Launceston Examiner*, December 19, 1896;
"North and West Direct Routes", *Launceston Examiner*, December 30, 1896.

6 Read to Simmons, May 20, 1898, *PWD 18/1/3430, Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 61 Vic 17 Item 3756 – Track: Mole Creek to Stitt Bridge*, AOT.

7 Journals of the House of Assembly, December 3, 1897, 224.

8 Sketch Map of West Coast of Tasmania, June 23, 1973, Mines Department of Tasmania.

9 Mineral lease 3260/93, Folio 63, Page 33, surveyed May 21, 1898, Mineral Resources Tasmania.

The map-makers may have used a different nomenclature because the starting and ending points of a track are obvious on a map.[10]

Although it didn't become established at the time, the term "Innes Track" was first used in the newspapers in August 1897 by Daniel Griffin, just after Innes had completed the survey.[11] It seemed that, for Griffin, Innes was the personification of the track that he disliked so intensely and he rarely wasted an opportunity to point out, what he felt, were the many mistakes made by Innes. Griffin's use of the term Innes Track or Innes route continued for a few years and was occasionally taken up by others but generally remained a minor and incidental title.

Until the 1920s for the most part the name Mole Creek Track, and some minor variants, was used in government correspondence, and it was exclusively called the Innes Track on maps. This changed about the time of the proclamation of the Cradle Mountain Scenic Reserve in 1922. With the end of prospecting, mining, hunting and cattle agistment, official interest from the PWD and Mines Department waned and with it the name Mole Creek Track.

When the urban bushwalkers arrived, and found, or were directed to, the track, there was an interest in its history. They turned to the written record and found Innes' detailed narrative. This was enough, even though many of the people that

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10 In its early life the Mole Creek Track changed its identity a few times before it was made in 1898 largely because its exact starting and ending points weren't established. However, Russell's claim to this route was tenuous since it already existed as the track made a few years earlier by the Mole Creek and Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Company, which had employed Russell as a prospector.

11 "Contradictory Telegrams", *Mercury*, August 21, 1897.

guided them and hunted in the area had worked on the track or knew people who had. The bushwalkers in the 1920s also wrote the PWD track-cutters completely out of the history of this track for about 70 years.

The reason for the dominance of the name "Innes Track" for the Mole Creek Track was its transition from a working track for cattlemen, snarers and prospectors to a recreational track for bushwalkers. The compelling reasons to reject this name are that it recognises a person who did not pioneer the route and it reinforces the absence of the track-cutters.[12] The strength of Innes' report, and its unintended drowning out of the role of the track cutters, continued to be felt into the late 1990s. A number of otherwise well researched books and articles perpetuated the narrative of Innes the track-cutter. Rae's 1983 book on West Coast railways begins by quoting from Innes' report and stated that Innes had been instructed to cut and mark a track.[13] In 1989, Binks also quotes Innes' report and went further to describe the process for cutting 'Exploration Tracks', which includes the Mole Creek Track, as being 'constructed by parties of up to half a dozen men led by a competent bushman or surveyor' and continues to make a fairly detailed account of the track cutting.[14] This small mistake in an appendix

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12 The Mole Creek Track, like most Tasmania tracks had more than one name, ranging from the formal to the informal. All government tracks had a formal name given in government legislation that funded their construction, the Public Works Expenditure Acts, and these names almost always described them by their origins and destinations. Some of the better known and more substantial tracks were called; 'Track - Marlborough, via Collingwood Valley to Linda gold fields', 'Track - Tyenna to Gordon' and 'Track - Pelion Plains to King River Bridge'. Naturally these cumbersome titles were abbreviated in government correspondence and in the newspapers and then became the names that lodged in the historical record.

13 Lou Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast* (Moonah: Rae, 1984): 2-3.

14 Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, 233.
Even in 2010 a well researched book on the Charles Whitham repeats many of the fallacies about the Mole Creek Track.

of a very thorough book was the lowest point for the recognition of the PWD track-cutters, but it does demonstrate the power of Innes' report to portray the difficulties of surveying in the Tasmanian bush and to provide an engaging account of 'laying out' the Mole Creek Track . In 1998, more extensive archival research by Haygarth revealed the role of the track-cutters and he recognised their significance and re-established the original name of the "Mole Creek Track" in his book.[15] This thesis should reinforce this position beyond dispute. The track surveyed by Innes, and which became the substantial benched route that bushwalkers and tourists sometimes appreciate today, was made by the hard work of bush-farmers, labourers and their overseers. It is the Mole Creek Track.

Simon Kleinig, Rambles in Western Tasmania, Articles by Charles Whitham 1912-1924, (Sandy Bay: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 2010), 71, 72.

15 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, 75.

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PWD 18/1/2539	Correspondence and associated papers relating to various works provided for in Public Works Execution Acts, 55 Vic. 56 Item 2716 - Branch Road: Railton to Sunnyside
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APPENDIX 1

Examination of 1898 Mole Creek Track along Arm River Track Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park May 2007

Peter Brown

Approved under Grant of Authority by Regional Manager North, Parks & Wildlife Service, dated 27th April 2007

Conducted as part of Master of Arts (History), University of Tasmania, November 2007

SUMMARY

Excavations were made on sections of the Mole Creek Track, also known as the Innes Track, originally constructed in 1898. These excavations were conducted near the Pelion Plains on a section of the Mole Creek Track now in use by bushwalkers and known as the Arm River Track. The work was done as part of Master's research into the Mole Creek Track. The excavations were approved by the Parks and Wildlife Service and conducted under the supervision of an archaeologist. Four sites were examined to determine the construction methods for benched track, culverts, brush and heavy corduroy.

The excavations revealed that the benched track was formed by the cut and fill method and included hardening of the track surface. Evidence of a drain was found. The track was cut to, and sometimes a little wider, than the originally specified width of 1.8 metres. The section of track examined appeared to comply with general requirements for acceptable grade and smooth alignment.

The design of culverts was determined with reference to some eroded culverts and small excavations of one culvert. The general arrangement was for foundations on each bank of sleeper or bed logs on which was placed three beam logs. Decking of smaller round timber was placed across the beam logs. Kerb logs on either side of the culvert then contained the soil surface placed onto the deck.

No timber of the heavy corduroy could be found either due to incorrect location of this site, later re-use of the timber or rotting of the timber.

Brush corduroy was identified and the size and spacing of the timber determined.

Further surface examination of benched track would show the consistency of the construction method for various ground conditions. What appears to be a better preserved culvert was identified and should provide information not revealed in the partially damaged culvert excavated for this report. Probing of the soil around the brush and heavy corduroy sites would reveal more information about width and alignment with minimal disturbance.

Consideration of the historical fabric of the Mole Creek Track should be made during the maintenance of the Arm River Track by the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Contents

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Resource Activity Application (not included)
Appendix 2 – 'Justification of Excavation' (not included)
Appendix 3 – copy of Grant of Authority (not included)

Figures

Tables

Definition of Terms

Beam: The lengthwise member of a culvert or bridge that spans the opening and supports the structure.

Bed log: A horizontal log lain in a shallow trench to support a plank or logs.

Benched track: A track formed by excavating and filling to form a graded and easily negotiable path on a cross slope.

Brush corduroy: Corduroy made with small round timber either from branches of trees or bushes.

Corduroy: Timber laid transversely to the direction of travel of a track to form a solid surface over soft ground.

Culvert: An earth covered simple beam bridge across a stream or water-course.

Cut & fill: A method of forming a benched track on a cross slope by excavating the slope to form the inner half of the bench and using the spoil to form the outer edge of the bench.

Deck: Surface of culvert or bridge that provides support to walkers.

Kerb log: Log laid at the side of a bridge or culvert above and onto the deck.

Full bench: The total width of the track is excavated out of the slope and the track contains no compacted fill material.

Grade: The amount of elevation change between two points over a given distance expressed as a percentage (metres change in elevation for every 100 horizontal metres, commonly known as "rise over run"). A track that rises 8 vertical metres in 100 horizontal metres has an 8% grade. A grade of 100% would have an angle of 45°.

Heavy corduroy: Corduroy made with hand-split timber planks.

Stringer: A deck element in timber bridges that supports transverse deck planks and runs parallel to the beam span.

Sleeper log: see bed log.

Sideling: Describes a track which is angled across the face of a slope. The track is often cut into the slope.

Track: Pedestrian access way on natural ground or fill.

1. INTRODUCTION

This work was undertaken as part of a Master of Arts (History) on the Mole Creek Track. The Mole Creek Track, generally known as the Innes Track, runs from Liena, near Mole Creek, to Rosebery passing through what is now the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park. Parts of it are incorporated into the Overland Track and the Arm River Track. It was constructed by the Tasmanian Public Works Department in 1898 and 1899 in response to lobbying, mainly from Launceston businessmen, for a direct route to the expanding mining industry on the West Coast.

Unlike many of the tracks constructed in this period, much of the Mole Creek Track can be located and large sections of the track are well preserved. Despite many hundreds, if not thousands of kilometres, of tracks being constructed by the Public Works Department, there are only a few archival records relating to how these tracks were constructed. The Mole Creek Track represents the only substantial overland track from central to western Tasmania to be largely extant. Detailed examination of the Mole Creek Track could reveal much about how substantial hand-formed tracks were made.

Field examination of the Mole Creek Track identified four sites, along a section now incorporated into the Arm River Track, near the Pelion Plains at the centre of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park. These sites are examples of benched track, culverts, heavy corduroy and brush corduroy. The work was approved by the Parks & Wildlife Service with input from the Aboriginal Heritage Office and Department of Primary Industries and Water. It was supervised by Anne McConnell, consultant archaeologist.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

2.1 General Location of the Survey Area

The sites examined are near the centre of the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park on the Tasmanian Central Plateau. The general location is shown in Figure 2.1 and in more detail in Figure 2.2. The sites are near the Pelion Plains which are situated between the headwaters of the Mersey and Forth Rivers. Here the Mole Creek Track has been partially incorporated in the Arm River Track, a modern bushwalking track which provides access to the Pelion Plains.

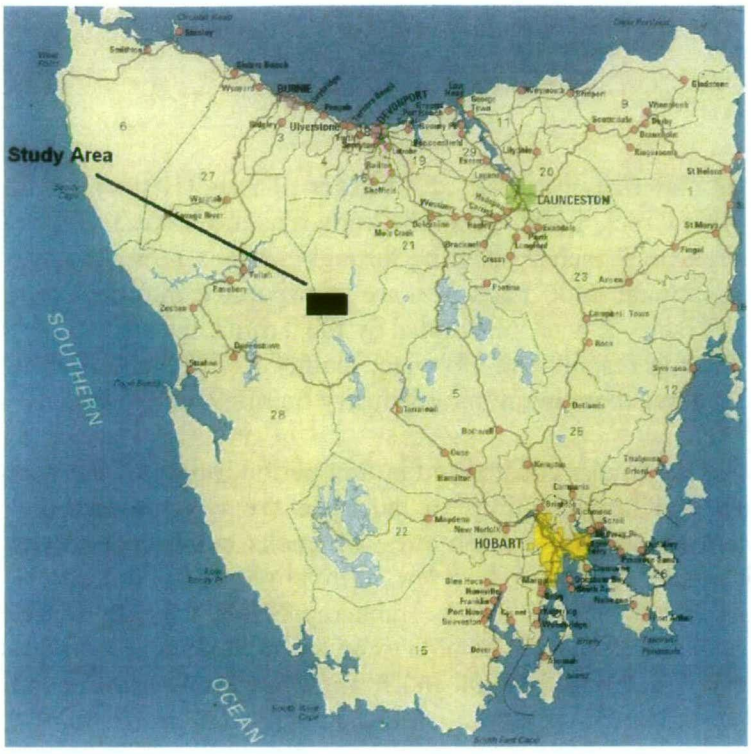

Figure 2.1 - General Location of Sites

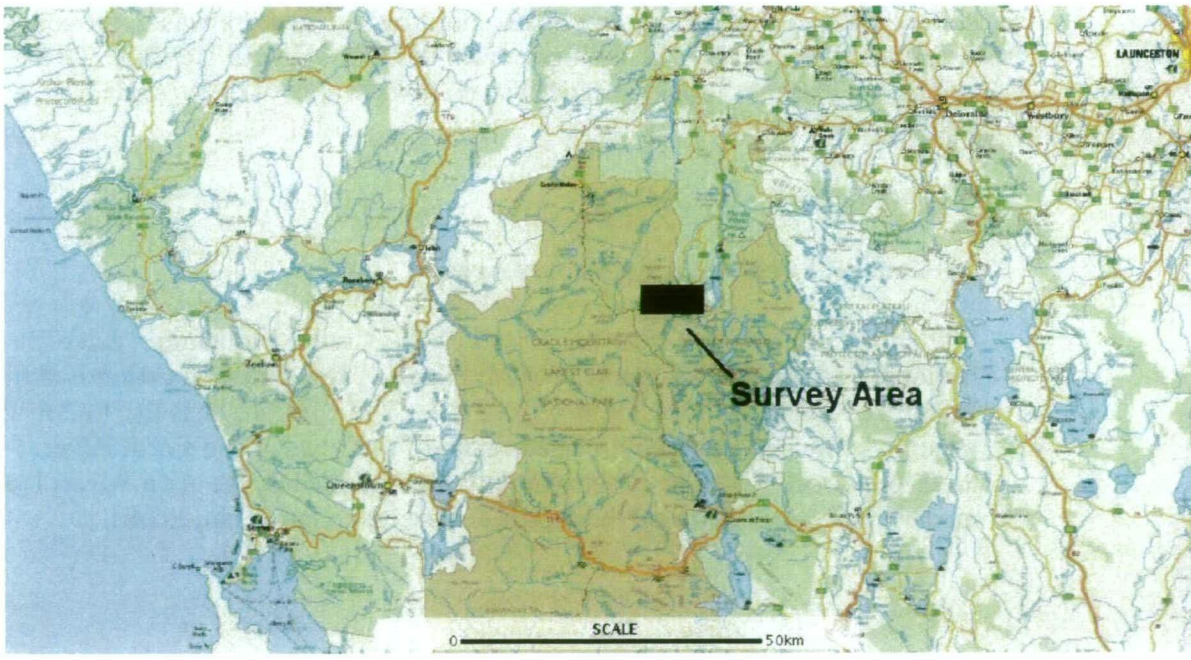

Figure 2.2 – Location of Sites

2.2 Location of Excavation Sites

The four sites studied were chosen to include examples of benched track, culvert, heavy corduroy and brush corduroy. Their locations are given in Table 2.1 below. Approval was given for an excavation in the area of Lake Curran but this work has not been undertaken and that approval has expired. The culvert location was incorrectly given in the Resource Activity Application due to an inaccurate GPS location resulting from heavy tree cover. The error was identified in the field and the correct location excavated. It was identified as remote from any of the Aboriginal artefacts listed in the Tasmanian Aboriginal Site Index. The natural values of the correct site were similar to those of the incorrect location.

Table 2.1 - Excavation Sites

Location Name	Grid Reference	Description
Benched Track	[4 26,020E 53 70,930N GDA 94]	1,000 m west of Wurragarra Creek
Culvert	[4 25,150E 53 70,320N GDA 94]	1,100 m west of Benched Track site
Heavy Corduroy	[4 23,710E 53 69,760N GDA 94]	400 m east of Lake Ayr
Brush Corduroy	[4 23,340E 53 69,620N GDA 94]	100 m south of Lake Ayr

The locations are shown on the 1:25,000 maps CATHEDRAL (Tasmap 1988) and ROWALLAN (Tasmap 1984), refer to Figure 2.3.

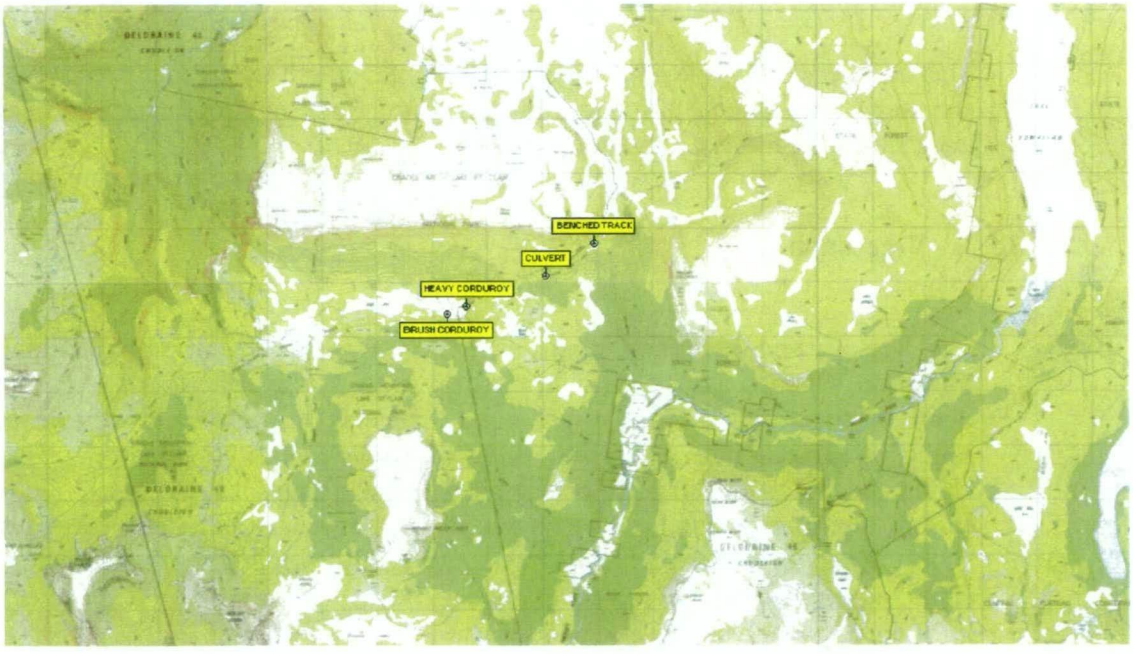

Figure 2.3 Location of Excavation Sites (Tasmap 1984, 1988)

The sites were accessed from the Arm River Track. The total distance from the start of the Arm River Track was between 5 and 8 km.

2.3 Climate

The general climate is described as maritime, in that most rain falls during autumn and winter. Rainfall at Cradle Mountain, about 15 kilometres to the north-west, is

an average of 2,700 mm per year. The mean daily minimum temperature is less than 0°C for the months of June, July and August. The survey sites are in a remote highland location subject to severe weather conditions at any time of year. Snow falls occur here even in summer months (Bureau of Meteorology 2007).

2.4 Geology and Topography

The general geology of the Pelion Plains was described as follows by Burns, '...Permian rocks rest upon an irregular surface developed in Precambrian quartzite, and are capped with a widespread dolerite sill, although in some areas the dolerite boundaries are discordant' (1959). The plains and southern slopes of the Oakleigh Range are Permian sediments that have been exposed by the erosion of the dolerite capping, which is still evident on the mountain tops (Macleod, Jack & Tereader 1961). The area has been recently glaciated resulting in surface glacial deposits.

The Pelion Plains, at an altitude of 800 metres, is dominated to the north by the Oakleigh Range and to the south by Mounts Pelion East, Doris and Ossa. The plains fall away to the west into the valley of the Forth River and to the east to the valley of the Mersey River.

The south-eastern slope of the Oakleigh Range, where the sites are located, is at elevations of between 820 and 1,000 metres. Rock outcrops near the benched track site at the highest elevation.

2.5 Vegetation

The western end of Pelion Plains is largely classified as Eastern Buttongrass Moorland which is associated with the peat soil. At the eastern end of the Pelion Plains, in the poorly drained soils around Lake Ayr, are woodlands of *Eucalyptus coccifera* (Tasmanian snow gum) and *Eucalyptus gunnii* (cider gum). The low laying and water-logged plain on the south-eastern edge of the lake is covered by eastern alpine sedgeland. The slopes of the Oakleigh and Pelion Ranges are largely made up of *Eucalyptus delegatensis* (gum-topped string-bark) forest over either rainforest or *Leptospermum* (Tasveg 2007a).

2.6 Disturbance to the Survey Area

Much of the Arm River Track was constructed as the Mole Creek Track and as such has been in use since 1898. It has been exposed to wear from walkers and from cattle driven to and from the Pelion Plains. Its use increased when it was re-cleared in 1963 and has become a well used access route to the Pelion Plains for bush-walkers. In 2004-05 up to 3,000 walkers used the Arm River Track (Parks and Wildlife Service 2006). In many places, the track has been subject to

considerable disturbance by more than 100 years of erosion and decay. Additional disturbance has been the result of maintenance and modification by the Parks and Wildlife Service including excavation of parts of the track structure for drains, adding rocks to the track surface and the addition of surface boarding.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical Background

Seasonable occupation of the area by Aboriginal people has been demonstrated from about 10,000 B.P. by finds in a rock shelter located several kilometres east of the sites (Lourandos 1983). A number of artefacts were identified in the area from the Aboriginal Heritage Office database (Cowley, K. 2007, pers. comm.,24 April).

A route from Gad's Hill, to the north, to the Pelion Plains, and its stories, were known to Aboriginal people accompanying a party led by George Augustus Robinson's sons in 1837 (Robinson 1837). At Lake Ayr, called 'Tam er, ter lore, ker ter', the group killed ducks and a platypus for food (Robinson 1837).

The Pelion Plains were probably used for summer grazing of cattle by the Field family from about the 1850s (Cubit, S. 1999, pers. comm., 6 Dec). Access to the Pelion Plains may have been along the established Aboriginal route from the February Plains and exploited a series of open plains along the top of the plateau between the Mersey and Forth Rivers. The route left the plateau near the Tarn of Islands some 2 kilometres west of the current Arm River Track but joined, what was to become, the route of the Arm River Track near Lake Ayr.

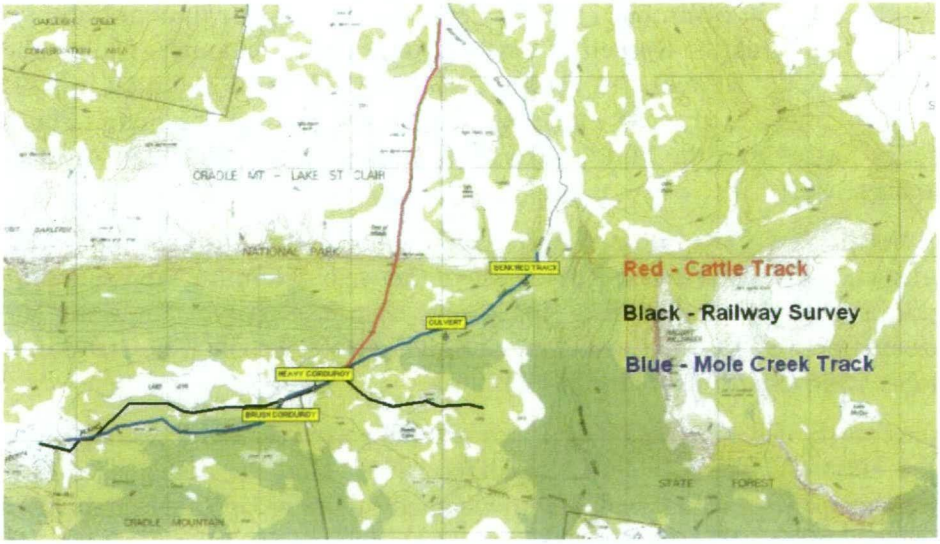

Figure 3.1 – Development of Routes

The first definitive information of European activity in this area comes when John McKenna, with two men, found a route from Liena to Mount Lyell in April 1888 under the instructions of the Minister for Lands and Works (McKenna 1890).

Some of this route was possibly along the route used by the cattle graziers and originally established by the Aboriginal people of this area.

Development of the area began in earnest when the Mole Creek and Zeehan railway survey reached the Pelion Plains in April 1891 via Lee's Paddocks on the Mersey River about 5 km to the south east. Exploration was driven by both the desire to form routes from Launceston, via Mole Creek, to the West Coast and to open up the country between to mineral exploration (Haygarth 1998).

The railway survey opened a route into this area which promoted prospecting and resulted in the Mole Creek & Zeehan Mineral Exploration and Prospecting Company consolidating the easier high level stock route from the February Plains into a track to the Pelion Plains in September 1891 (Launceston Examiner 1892). This track then followed the railway survey over the Pelion Plains to Mount Pelion West and continued further west to Granite Tor (Haygarth 1998). Silver was discovered at Douglas Creek near the site of the current Old Pelion Hut in late 1891 prompting a small rush and the pegging of a number of mineral claims (Haygarth 1998). Despite the prospecting company's track being well defined, it was not well made. A typical section at Mount Pelion West was through dense scrub and '...was over roots, under branches, across burns, around trees and in a general way poked along' (Prichard 1898b). Most prospecting and mining in the area stopped by 1894 when the Mole Creek and Zeehan Mineral Prospecting and Exploration Company ceased operations and the silver field on the Pelion Plains was largely abandoned.

Interest in routes connecting the populated regions of Tasmania and the burgeoning mineral fields of the West Coast re-emerged in 1896. One of these potential routes was via the Pelion Plains exploiting the existing prospecting company track. In Launceston, on 9th April 1896, the North and West Direct Route Association was formed with the aim of linking Launceston and the West Coast (Launceston Examiner 1898a). Using money raised by public subscription, the Association sent C. Russell to locate a route from Liena, near Mole Creek, to the West Coast. He reported finding two routes when he returned in late June 1896. One route used the prospecting company track over the Pelion Plains and the other passed over the Middlesex Plains, north of Cradle Mountain (Launceston Examiner 1896).

The North-West Direct Route Association lobbied the Minister for Lands and Works who agreed to review Russell's two routes to determine their suitability for a more substantial track. E.G. Innes, the District Surveyor for Franklin, was instructed on 16th October 1896 to conduct the review which he started on 25th October 1896 (Smith 1896, Innes 1897).

In the course of the survey, E.G. Innes and his party reached the southern end of the February Plains in late November 1896. Here he deviated from the earlier stock-route, which had been developed by the prospecting company by following Wurragarra Creek to Oakleigh Divide.

Innes reported that the country along, what is now called, the Arm River Track from Wurragarra Creek to the Pelion Plains was;

partly open, part densely wooded, but with the exception of a few scattered basaltic boulders upon the slopes of Mount Oakley there is nothing to make track-forming expensive. The gradients upon this portion vary from 1 in 14 to 1 in 40 to level, and the country, with the exception of a few soft patches near Lake Ayr, is sound (1897).

Innes' survey route rejoined the prospecting company track a short distance east of Lake Ayr (Check 1897). A few hundred metres nearer to Lake Ayr Innes '...found the old marked line of the Mole Creek- Coast railway survey, made some years since by Mr. Stewart, and clearing it out, followed it until we reached the old camp of that party at Mount Pelion East *(now the location of the Pelion Huts)*' (Innes 1897).

Innes completed surveying the route via the Pelion Plains on 19th May 1897 and did not survey the second route. After Innes' report of the survey was released on 3rd August 1897 the Government was again lobbied, this time to form, what was to become, the Mole Creek Track (Pillinger 1897). On 10th December 1897 expenditure of £ 3,000 ($ 6,000) was approved in Parliament (Legislative Council 1897).

The construction of the Mole Creek Track began when the Public Works Department gangs started work on 30th January 1898 (Launceston Examiner 1898b). The work was under the control of the Chief Inspector of Roads, North, George Simmons. The overseer for a party of about 20 men in the areas examined in this report was Richard Broomhall (Simmons 1898). Broomhall was permitted to deviate from the line surveyed by Innes when he could improve the track or make construction easier (Prichard 1898a). The Mole Creek Track was completed on 10th April 1899 (Launceston Examiner 1899).

Initially the Mole Creek Track was used to access some mineral deposits during a small boom at Lake Windermere and Barn Bluff but by 1901 there was only about one pack horse per week travelling from Liena to these mineral shows (Waller 1901). The Mole Creek Track remained a useful, but infrequently used, track despite complaints about its length and condition as it still provided the only usable route across the Forth River valley for many miles (Smith 1920). The main users were snarers and cattlemen who drove cattle on the Pelion Plains and Lake Windermere for summer grazing. This continued until after the proclamation of the Cradle Mountain Scenic Reserve in 1922 (Cubit, S. 1999, pers. comm., 6 Dec).

When the Reserve was extended in 1935 the Mole Creek Track became its boundary between Lake Ayr and Wurragarra Creek. Fallen timber was cleared from the track and, on open ground, rotted stacks were replaced and some stone cairns erected. Around 1945, Lorinna snarer Tom McCoy built a hut on the south eastern edge of the marshy plain near Lake Ayr which was just outside of the Reserve boundary (Cubit & Murray 1988).

The continued interest in bushwalking in the Pelion Plains area resulted in the Mole Creek Track between Wurragarra Creek and the Pelion Plains being '...retraced on the ground, blazed, and cleared to some extent...' by the

Launceston Walking Club in June 1963 (Manning 1964). This became known as the Arm River Track.

From the 1930s the Pelion Plains had become a popular destination and transit location for bushwalkers particularly after the construction of the Overland Track. The Arm River Track became a well used access point to the Pelion Plains due to it's relatively short length and the relative inaccessibility of the other access route via the Forth River valley.

In 1971, the Cradle Mountain Reserve became the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park and then became part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in 1982. The Arm River Track, which includes part of the Mole Creek Track, is maintained by the Parks & Wildlife Service. There is evidence extensive maintenance and modification of the track by the Parks and Wildlife Service, the most recent being in April 2007.

Table 3.1 Historic Synopsis of Mole Creek Track – Wurragarra Creek to Lake Ayr

YEAR	EVENT
10,000 B.P.	Seasonal Aboriginal occupation of area
1837	Robinsons and party pass over from February to Pelion Plains in search of Aborigines
1850s	Field's cattle on Pelion Plains
1888	McKenna travels to Mount Lyell via Pelion Plains
1891, Apr	Mole Creek to Zeehan Railway survey camp at Pelion Plains
1892, Jan	Mole Creek & Zeehan MPE Co form track through Pelion Plains from Liena to Granite Tor
1896, Nov	E.G. Innes surveys route of track from Liena to Rosebery via Oakleigh Range
1898, Feb	Public Works Department forms Mole Creek Track based on Innes' survey, working at Oakleigh
1922	Cradle Mountain Scenic Reserve declared
1935	Track cleared and surveyed as boundary to Reserve
1963, Jun	Track re-cut out by Launceston Walking Club to form Arm River Track
1971	Scenic Reserve becomes part of Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park.
1982	Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park becomes part of Tasmanian World Heritage Area
2000 - 2007	Parks and Wildlife Service maintain and alter Arm River Track

3.2 Archaeological Background

There has been no historical archaeological site survey carried out previously in this area. The Mole Creek Track, called the Innes Track and including the current Arm River Track, was briefly described under the Regional Forestry Agreement (Pearson & Young 1997).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Procedure Prior to Field Work

The original route of the Mole Creek Track, along what is now the Arm River Track, was located during a number of field trips. In addition to these trips, the best sites to be examined were also determined by reference to original descriptions of track made by the Public Works Department overseer, Broomhall, and by reference to contemporary photographs. Large sections of the original Mole Creek Track in the study area appeared to be well preserved and contained examples of many of the construction methods employed. Limited archival information identified a section of track near Lake Ayr as the only location constructed with heavy corduroy (Broomhall 1898). Brush corduroy was also identified from the archival records as being present nearby and earlier field work had located preserved timbers at the soil surface.

Archival records showed the Mole Creek Track in the study area had 28 culverts, more than any other section. Many were identified during earlier field trips but the majority were heavily damaged by erosion, however, a number of possibly undisturbed culverts were located.

Both archival records and field work showed that much of the section of the Mole Creek track on the side of the Oakleigh Range was benched. Despite many years of use and maintenance, some sections of, what appeared to be, undisturbed benched track were identified.

Limited documentary information on the way that this track, or similar tracks, were made was found despite considerable archival research. The best information included; a Spurling photograph from 1898 of benching on the Mole Creek Track near one of the present excavation sites, a detailed tender for track construction in another location, general observations of the track during and soon after construction and general information on construction of bridle tracks (Public Works Department 1886, Coane 1915).

A formal Resource Activity Application, RAA, was made to the Parks and Wildlife Service to conduct the excavations. A copy of the RAA and supporting documentation are attached, Appendix 1 and 2. The consultant archaeologist was selected and briefed before the work was conducted. Delays in the approval process meant that the work was not conducted until May 2007. The Grant of Authority was approved on 27th April 2007 (Appendix 3).

4.2 Field Procedure

The methodology proposed to examine the track aimed to minimise the size of excavations. A trench, of approximately one shovel width, 30 cm, would be executed across the track to the depth required to expose the subsurface structure. This method was not adopted for all examinations as smaller excavations were often possible. The actual method employed is detailed in the descriptions of the excavations.

All information was recorded in a field note book, which was transcribed into a typed note. Locations were determined using a hand-held GPS generally working with an accuracy of about 10 metres.

Each site was photographed before any disturbances. A string line was then laid out to define the excavation site. For the benched track and corduroy sites, the surface profile was measured before any excavation. The profile was developed by measuring the distance from a horizontal string line. The excavation was controlled by removing sediment in layers. First, the vegetation was removed and then the root layer with its associated earth. Then earth was removed in approximately 3 cm layers until constructed surfaces were encountered. A small hand pick was used for rough excavations and trowels for fine work. A shovel was used at the heavy corduroy site after preliminary probing to determine the amount of soil and vegetation above the track surface. Photographs were taken during excavation work. The benched track sites were surface profiled after the surface had been cleaned and again after further exploratory excavation. Matting was placed in the bottom of each excavation as a marker of disturbance for any future excavations. All vegetation and material removed from the sites was restored to their original positions after the work was completed. Cut vegetation was distributed in the adjacent area so as not to be clearly visible.

The field work was conducted from the 2nd to 5th May 2007.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Surface Visibility and Area Surveyed

The main benched track site, B1, was completely obscured by vegetation but the two nearby benched sites, B2 & B3, were partially clear due to erosion, wear and recutting (Figures 5.6, 5.14 and 5.1). The culvert site was almost entirely covered with silt except for the ends of several pieces of round timber (Figure 5.24). There was complete and thick vegetation coverage of the heavy corduroy site as shown in Figure 5.35 and there was a substantial layer of sediment. The brush corduroy site was covered by tussocks of grass and a layer of sediment between 0 and 15 cm deep, as shown in Figure 5.41, except where wear had exposed some round timber. This site was also partially flooded, obscuring the view of the cording.

The total area excavated was 3.0 m^2, which was made up of 1.2 m^2 at the benched track site, 1.0 m^2 at the culvert site, 0.1 m^2 at heavy corduroy site and 0.7 m^2 at brush corduroy site. Excavations were between 10 and 30 cm deep.

5.2 Site Descriptions

5.2.1. Benched Sites

a) Setting

The benched track sites are located a few hundred metres west of Oakleigh Divide and Wurragarra Creek in an area of *Athrotaxis selaginoides* (King Billy Pine) rainforest with a scrubby understorey of myrtle and tea-tree

regrowth as shown in Figures 5.15, 5.4 and 5.1 (TasVeg 2007b). These sites are part of a straight, evenly graded, section of benched track.

Figure 5.1 - General View of Track and Site B3 Viewed from East, String Line Shows Location of Profile (Brown 2007)

The same area was photographed just after the Mole Creek Track was constructed in 1898.

Figure 5.2. - Mole Creek Track – General View of Area of Benched Track Sites Viewed From East 1898 (Spurling 1898)

The examination of the benched track sites consisted of one shallow excavation across the full width of an unused section of the Arm River Track (Site B1) and two small surface examinations at drainage channels dug through the track by the Parks & Wildlife Service, one (Site B2) about 4 metres uphill, east, of the main benching site and the other (Site B3) about 20 metres downhill, west, of it, as shown in Figure 5.3.

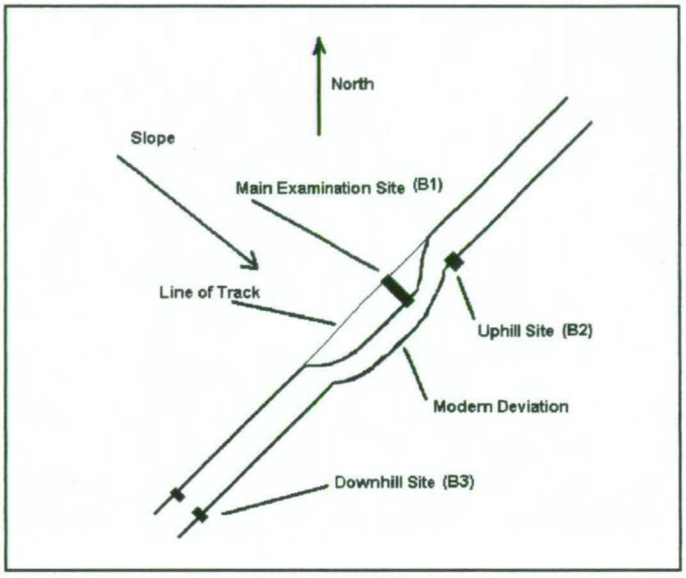

Figure 5.3 – Sketch Plan of Location of Sites for Benched Track

b) Main Benched Track Site, B1

The main benched site, B1, is not part of the current walking track as it has been diverted around two fallen trees which have since been partially removed. A layer of vegetation varying from moss to small bushes formed a continuous cover over the track surface, as shown in Figures 5.4, 5.5 & 5.6. The site was chosen as it showed no obvious signs of disturbance by erosion or maintenance, which was evident in all other nearby sections of the track, Figure 5.1

Figure 5.4 - Main Benched Track Site, B1, Viewed from South (Brown 2006)

Figure 5.5 - Main Benched Track Site, B1, Viewed from East (Brown 2006)

Figure 5.6 - View of Site B1 From West, String Line Indicates Site of Trench (Brown 2007)

The surface profile was measured before and after the vegetation and loose sediment layers were removed. A 30 cm wide strip of vegetation and loose sediment was cleaned off to reveal the firm track surface. This started on the natural slope about 30 cm above the track and ended when the natural slope was found downhill of the bench. An overview of the profile of the cleaned surface is as follows. The near vertical edge of the track in the side of the hill is capped by vegetation but the cutting face is well preserved. The natural strata of the soil can also be seen. The angle of the inner edge becomes shallower before joining the bench of the track. The bench is then nearly level until the outer edge of the track where it falls away to rejoin the natural slope of the hill. The shape is illustrated in Figure 5.7.

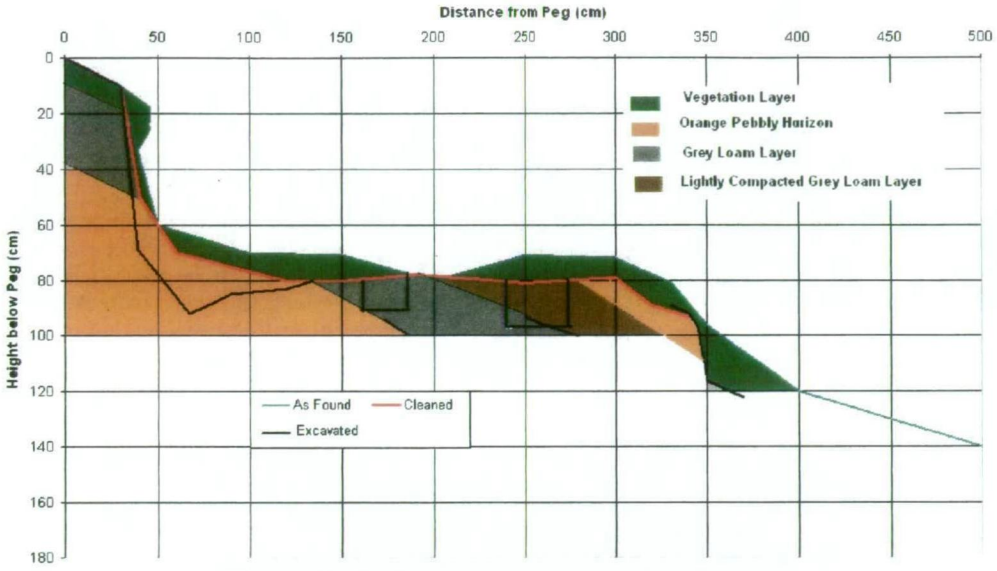

Figure 5.7 - Profile of Main Benched Track Site, B1,

Figure 5.8 - Main Benched Track Site, B1, with Vegetation Removed. (Brown 2007)

For the purposes of a more detailed description the track will be considered in three parts; bank face, inner bench and outer bench.

Bank face - The upper edge of the bank appears to be eroded as shown by a significant undercutting of the vegetation, however the vegetation has overgrown the edge and there is no erosion of the bank. The photograph below, taken at a location nearby, shows this same effect (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9 - Overhang of Vegetation on Inner Edge of Track Viewed from Outer Edge (Brown 2007)

The fall of the bank is about 4 to 1 while the toe of the bank falls at 1 to 1 and is about 20 cm wide.

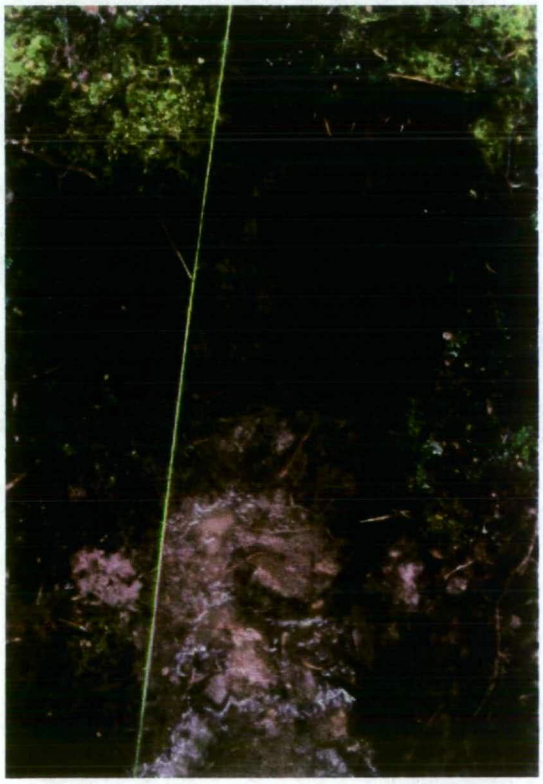

Figure 5.10 - View of Edge of Bench, Toe and Pebble Gutter (Brown 2007)

The soil in upper part of the bank is a grey loamy material. The soil below it and extending into the toe of the bank and across part of the bench is pebbly and orange coloured.

Inner Bench – The bench is approximately horizontal and about 240 cm wide. The inner 100 cm is a 20 cm deep deposit of quartz pebbles between 0.5 and 3.4 cm in diameter. The inner 30 cm is made up of the orange material seen in the toe of the cutting face and the middle 70 cm is the grey loamy material seen in the upper part of the bank. The pebbles are sub-angular and rounded and enclosed in loose black humic matter. The base of the fill is approximately V-shaped and the maximum depth is 20 cm (refer to Figure 5.7). Cobbles in the location can be seen in the 1898 Spurling plate and appear to be a deliberately made feature, presumably a drain. The drain was active during the period of the excavations.

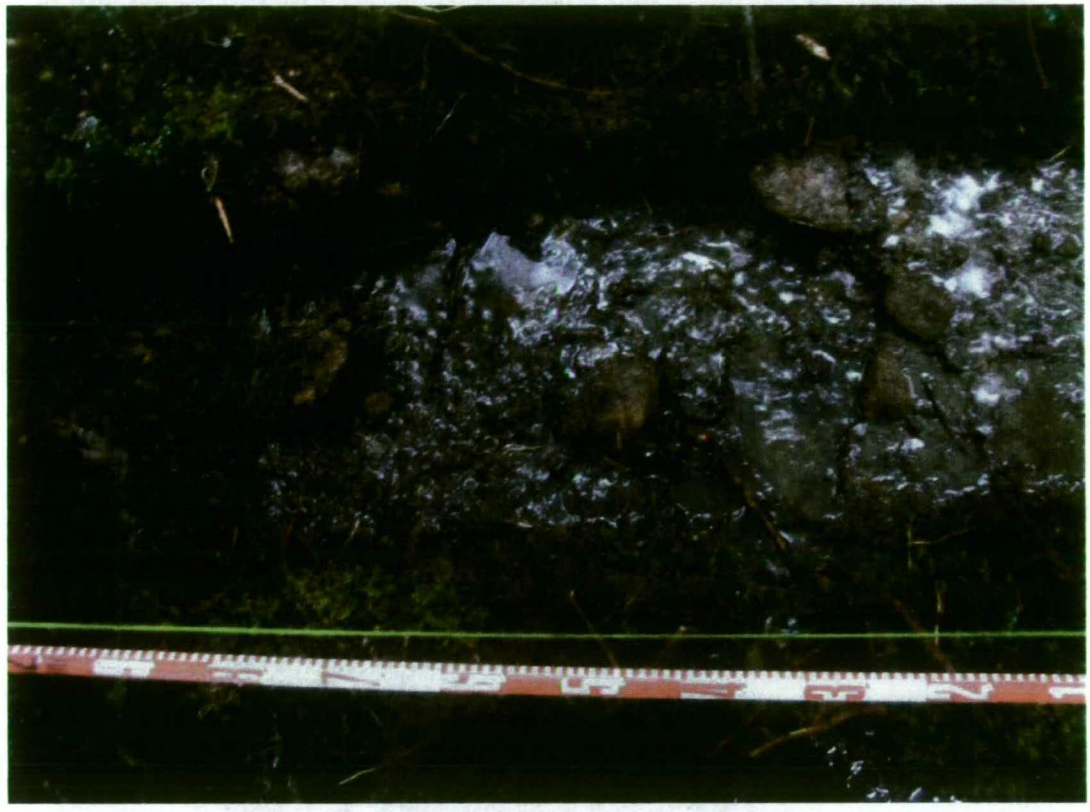

Figure 5.11 - View of Inner Edge of Bench, Toe and Pebble Gutter Before Excavations (Brown 2007)

Figure 5.12 – Pebbles Removed from Pebble Gutter (Brown 2007)

Outer Bench - About halfway across the bench the grey loam surface of the bench, which is very well compacted and unmarked, becomes slightly less well compacted (refer to Figure 5.7). This is about 80 cm wide and the outer 20 cm of the bench is made up of loosely compacted yellow/orange sediment which is similar to the material in the base of the benched section. It appears to contain fewer rocks than the natural material, indicating that they had been removed, possibly, to be used in the drain and/or the surface of the bench. This suggests that both the less well compacted grey loamy material and the yellow/orange sediment were dugout material which was re-deposited to form the outer edge of the bench. The outer bench is also penetrated by the roots of the vegetation further indicating that it is less compacted then the inner bench.

A number of stones, which are not normally found in the grey loamy material, are on the track surface of this layer suggesting that they had been added for track hardening.

Two small test-pits about 30 cm square and about 20 cm deep were excavated into the base of the track to determine the subsurface structure. Only grey clay soil could be distinguished before the pits filled with water.

c) Uphill Benched Track Site (B2)

A surface examination was made on the outer track edge about 4 metres uphill from the main benching site. The outer edge of the track had been cut by a drain constructed by Parks & Wildlife Service. The face of this cut was cleaned back to reveal its structure. No excavation occurred at this location.

Figure 5.13 - General View of Uphill Benched Track Site, B2, Viewed from West, String Line Shows the Natural Fall of the Slope (Brown 2007)

The profile of the entire width of the track was measured including the vegetation layer and the erosion in the track centre. This is shown in Figure 5.14. The angled toe between the bank of the track excavation and the bench, about 50 cm wide, is clearly visible, as was observed at site B1. The track bench shows about 35 cm of erosion in the centre. The width of what would have been the flat section of the bench is about 185 cm wide.

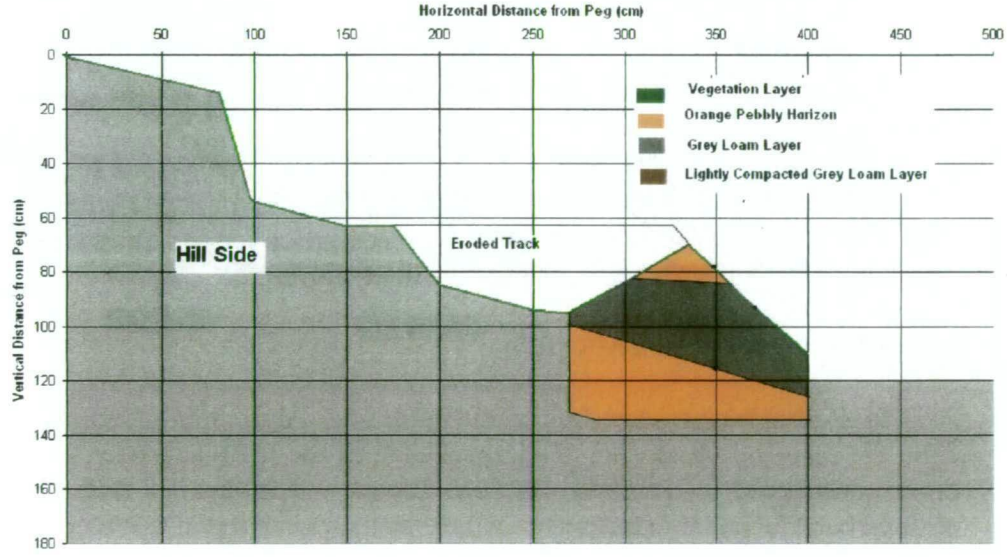

Figure 5.14 - Profile and Soil Types for Site B2 Viewed from Western Side

Figure 5.15 View of Outer Edge of Track Before Cleaning Surface, Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

The top 13 cm layer of the face of the modern drain is a pale orange/brown soft porous loam with some pebbles & stones and penetrated by roots of the vegetation cover. This forms a clear planar surface, with slight dip downhill. Below it is a 30 cm thick layer of firmer compact brown/grey gritty loam which contains flecks of charcoal. A few roots penetrate this layer. It is unclear where any change in grey loam happens but about halfway through there is a change in the angle of repose of the material which may be related to its degree of compaction. This would represent the demarcation between the grey loam in-situ and grey loam as fill. The bottom 22 cm to the drain floor is made up of orange/brown gritty sediment with pebbles which appears to be undisturbed. There is a broad transition between the grey loam to orange sediment shown by vegetation roots stopping 3 – 5 cm below the top of the boundary and the transition being of a mixture of both layers. The cleaned face is shown in the Figure below and the sketch Figure 5.14.

It should be noted that the large stones in the middle of the track appear to be a result of track maintenance.

Figure 5.16 - Site B2, Cleaned Off Outer Edge Viewed from West, String-Line Shows the Natural Cross-Slope (Brown 2007)

d) B3 - Downhill Benched Track Site

The third benched track site was examined about 20 m down hill (west) of the main benching site, B1. The inner edge of the track was cleaned of a thin layer of vegetation and sediment to examine the profile and the outer edge, at a modern drainage ditch, was examined for the soil profile. The general view is shown in Figure 5.17

Figure 5.17 - General View of Site B3 Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

The profile of the track was measured before and after the vegetation layer was removed from the inner edge. This revealed a similar profile to the main benched site, B1. The inner edge begins with a steep bank with a shallow angled toe at its foot and then a broad bench extends out. The angle of the bank is a fall of about 4.5 in 1. The toe is about 25 cm wide with a fall of about 1 in 3. The bench is about 2.4 metres wide.

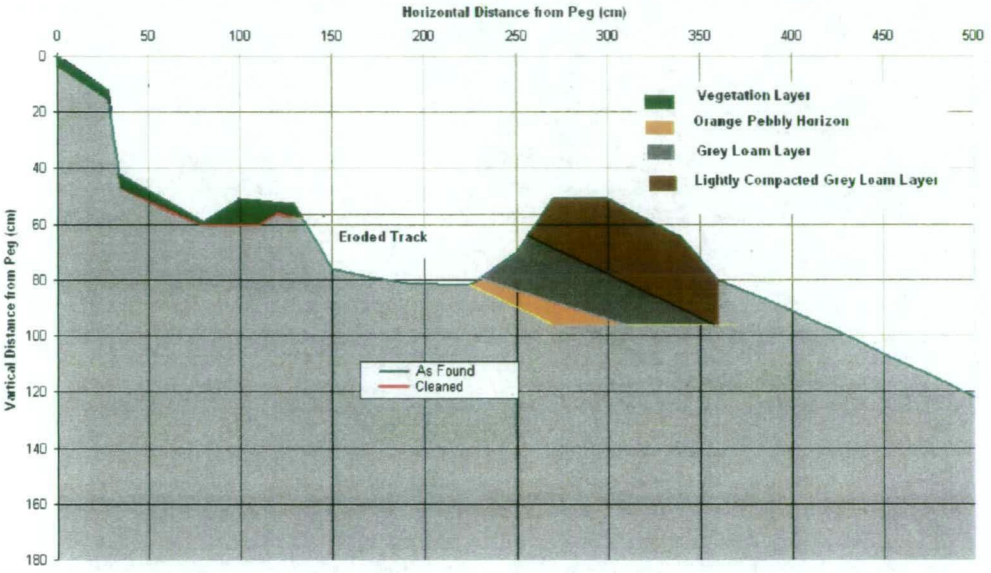

Figure 5.18 - Profile of Site B3 Viewed from West

The inner edge had a broad shallow drain about 70 cm wide protected by some stones as shown in Figure 5.19 below. The drain was still active during the examination.

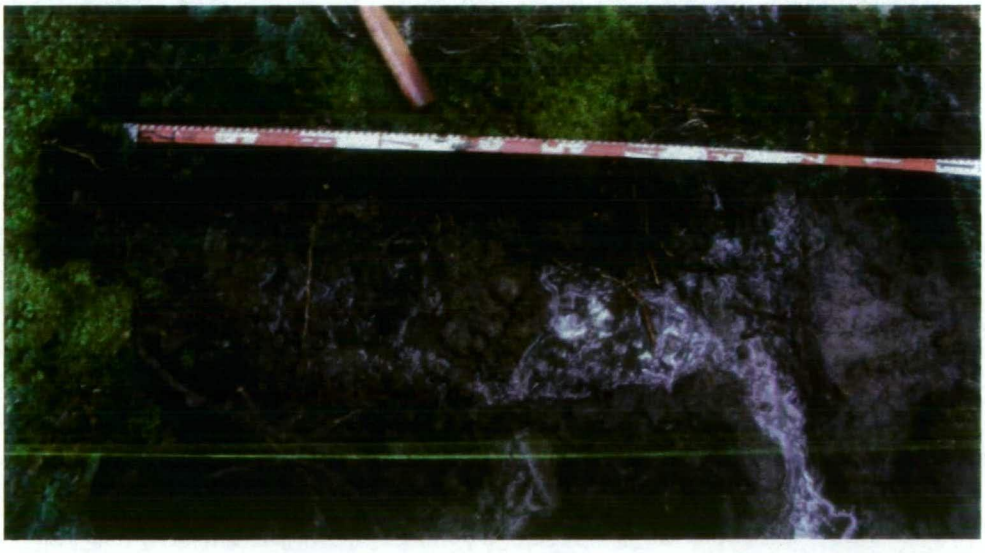

Figure 5.19 - Inner Edge of Track Showing Drainage, Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

The outer edge of the track had been cut by a modern drainage ditch which was cut to below the natural soil level. The majority of the face is grey loamy clay with no rocks or pebbles. No demarcation between fill and undisturbed material was found. The very bottom of the drain exposed a narrow strip of the orange/yellow rocky layer. Refer to Figure 5.20.

Figure 5.20 - Benched Track Site B3, Outer Edge (Brown 2007)

e) Interpretation

The three examinations of benched track sites, B1, B2 & B3, show consistent results. While the track was formed by simple "cut and fill" construction, it does also display some sophistication in the profile of the track, largely to control erosion. The interpretation is enhanced by reference to archival information on track cutting.

Construction - It was evident from the examination of the benching that it was constructed by 'cut and fill' where the material excavated by the track cutters from the slope is used to build up the outer edge of the track. The inner edge of the track is cut into the slope and the outer edge is made up of the fill. This was evident by the profile of the track in relation to the natural fall of the hill-side and by the stratification of the outer edge of the track representing the reverse of the strata of the inner side of the track.

The alternative to "cut and fill" is to fully cut the bench into the slope and discard the excavated material. A road building text from 1915 recommends cut and fill, but a tender from 1886 for the construction of a 14' track specified full benching (Coane, Public Works Department). Both methods are illustrated in Figure 5.21. The advantage of cut and fill is that less excavation is required to achieve the same bench width and is therefore quicker and

cheaper to construct than full benching. However, settling and stability of the outside of the bench must be considered with "cut and fill".

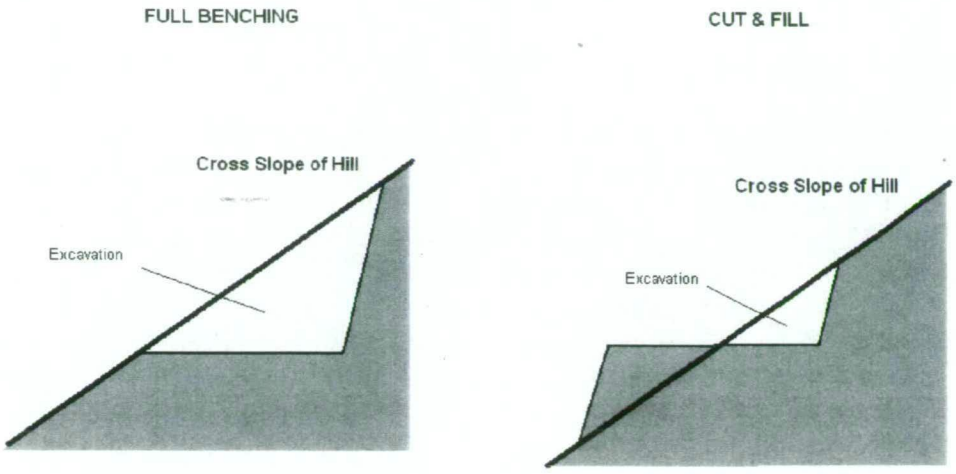

Figure 5.21 – Sketch of Full Benching and Cut & Fill Benching

Materials of Construction - The limited examination of the fill of the three benched sites showed that the outer edge of the track was made up solely of earth excavated from the inner edge of the bench. There was no evidence of timber or any other insubstantial material. This is consistent with a requirement in a 1886 track tender that 'Improper Materials', which were defined as ...'timber, mud, slurry, roots, or any unfit material...', should not be used (Public Works Department 1886).

The distribution of stones in the track appears to have been manipulated. There are more stones in the inner track edge and on the track surface than could be expected to occur naturally and very few in the fill on the outer edge. It is likely that the stones were removed from the fill to provide hardening of the track surface and the inner edge.

Width - The track at the three sites examined is between 1.8 metres (6 feet) and 2.4 metres (8 feet) wide. The original specification for the Mole Creek Track was that it was to be '...six feet wide...' (Secretary for Public Works 1898). In 1898, Prichard observed that, in the area of the excavation sites, the track was 2.4 metres (8 feet) wide (Prichard 1898a).

Grade – This section of benched track has a grade of between 12 and 14% (1 in 8 to 1 in 7). While it does exceed by 2 to 4% what was considered to be the maximum grade for a track, it does so for about 100 metres. This is the steepest section of the Mole Creek Track for many kilometres. Short sections of steep track were acceptable according to the general understanding of the time. Innes's instructions for the survey stated that the grade should be '...not more than 1 in 10 *[10%]*, and only for a short distance' (Secretary of Public Works 1896). A general rule for tracks from 1915 states that tracks '...are not in any, but extra-ordinary circumstances to be steeper than 1 in 8 *[12%]*, and then only for short lengths' (Coane).

Line – In the area of these track excavations, the track is straight for a total length of 100 metres. While there was no stated need for straight lines for the Mole Creek Track it is clear from this, and many other sections of track, that the track was '...done in perfectly straight or regular curved line' as specified in an 1886 contract for track construction (Public Works Department).

Drainage – Before these excavations there was no archival or field evidence of drains on the Mole Creek Track. The excavations revealed that the inner edge of the track appears to be a drain. This is shown by the profile of the track and the hardening of the inner edge with stones. This is consistent with both the Public Works Department track tender from 1886 and the 1915 text which states that '...it is better in sidelong cutting to make the finished surface always slope transversely towards the hill, and to turn the water across the path at frequent intervals so as to minimise scour' (Public Works Department 1886, Coane 1915). The drain, and "cut and fill" are illustrated in Figure 5.22 below.

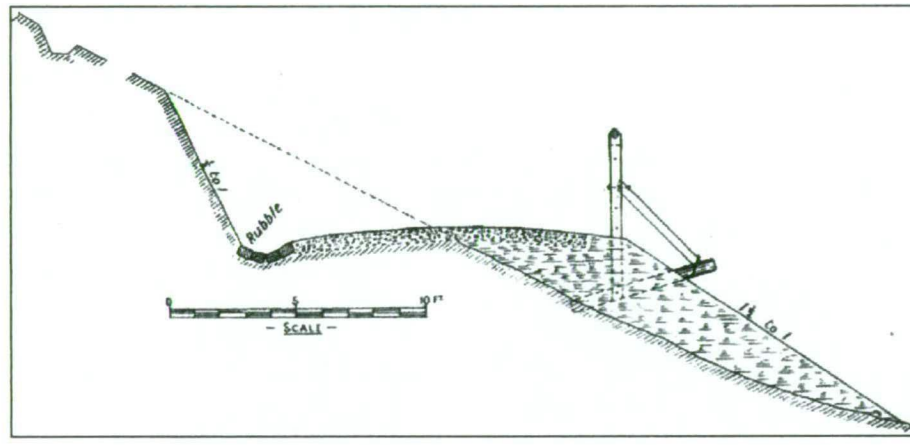

Figure 5.22 – Idealised Cross Section of Road (Coane 1915)

Mitre drains, drains across the track, were not observed but the 1886 tender required '...mitre drains from the foot of the slopes of embankments and ends of cuttings to the main ditches' (Public Works Department 1886).

There appears to be a further level of sophistication in the profile of the inner edge of the track. The steep angle of the inner cutting was made shallower where it meets the bench. This can also be observed in a photograph of the track from 1898, Figure 5.25. This may have been an attempt to reduce the potential for erosion of the bank. No archival information to support this practice has been found.

Drainage and erosion control was further controlled by the use of rocks and stones to line a broad shallow drain on the inner edge of the track. The line of stones on the inner edge of the track can be seen in the 1898 photograph. The drainage, even under a substantial root mat, was still effective and operating at the time of the excavations.

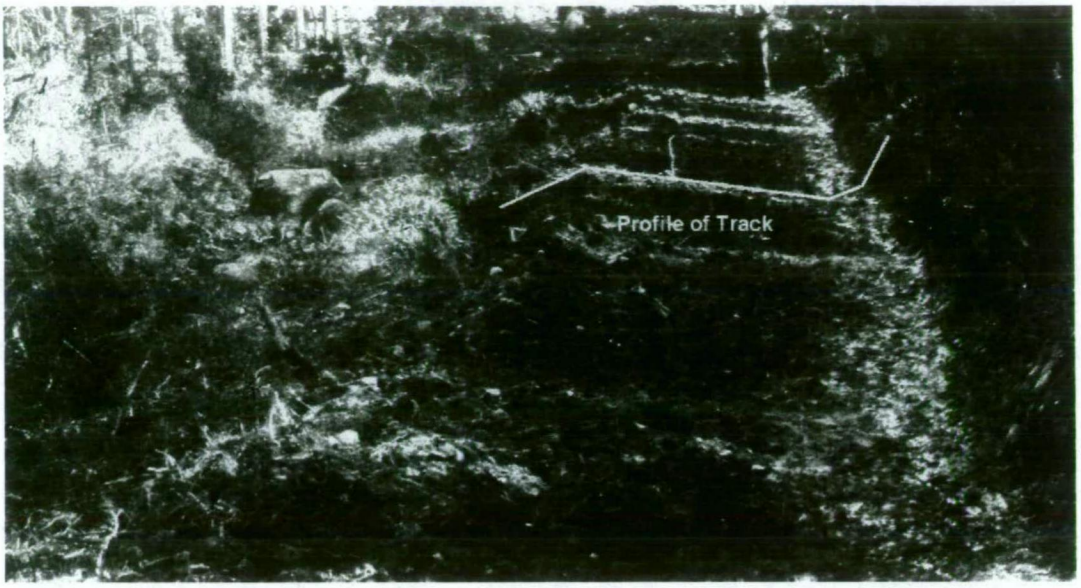

Figure 5.23 - Detail of Track as Constructed in Area of Benched Sites, Viewed from East (Spurling 1898)

5.2.2 Culvert Site

a) Setting

The site of the excavation of the culvert is about 1 kilometre west of the benched track sites and near the bottom of the slope of the Oakleigh Range. The culvert is located in a small stream bed at the edge of rainforest dominated by *Eucalyptus delegatensis*. The understorey is cutting grass, bauera and tea-tree (TasVeg 2007c). The general area is shown in Figure 5.24.

Figure 5.24 - View of Culvert Site Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

This site was chosen as most other culverts on the Arm River Track had been significantly damaged, often completely washed away, by strong stream flows. This culvert lay in a seasonal stream bed with generally little, and gentle, water flow. It was covered in a layer of silt but its presence was observed by a small section of exposed round timber and two parallel lines of tea-tree regrowth along both sides of the culvert about 2 metres apart. The same behaviour with regrowth of trees defining the edges of buried culverts was observed at other locations along the Arm River Track. The centre of the culvert had been covered by boarding installed by the Parks & Wildlife Service.

b) Examination

Two shallow excavations were undertaken, one on the downstream, southern, side of the culvert near the western end and the other on the upstream side at the eastern end.

The western pit was initially 50 by 50 cm and centred on the exposed round timber on the outer edge of the culvert. The sediment was cut back to reveal a line of parallel round timbers about 10 cm in diameter and separated by about 2 cm. The timber extended south past the end of the pit. It had rotted in-situ and impregnated with roots from the nearby trees.

Figure 5.25 - Location of First Test Pit, Viewed from South (note duckboard across gully in approximate centre of historical track) (Brown 2007)

The pit was gradually expanded to progressively expose more round timbers in an attempt to find the structure of the side of the culvert which should include the edge of any deck logs, a kerb log, and a beam. The final dimensions of the pit were 70 cm by 100 cm.

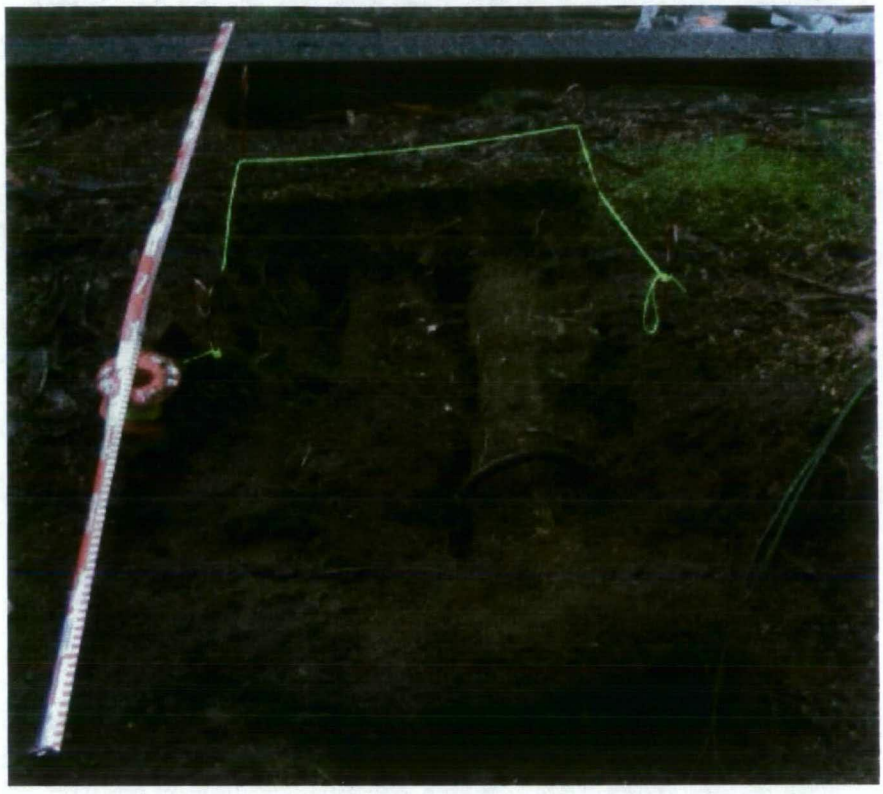

Figure 5.26 - First Test Pit Extended to the South Showing Round Timber and Possible Kerb Log in Foreground (Brown 2007)

There is no evidence of a support beam which would have been expected from the observation of some of the heavily eroded culverts nearby. On the extreme southern edge, and at right angles to the deck logs, is what appeared to be a log of between 7 – 8 cm diameter. It presented as relatively hard rotted organic brown soil rather than the black rotted sediment representative of the stream bed.

About 2 metres further down stream is another round log partially buried in the stream. This may have been a dislodged culvert timber but there is no clear evidence to relate it to the culvert.

It was anticipated that the culvert would have been covered with earth-fill as part of its construction, however, the sediment on the top of the culvert is very fine stream sediment. This suggests that the culvert has been substantially eroded in the past which has removed all the super-deck gravel surface and possibly removing the kerb logs.

Figure 5.27 - First Test Pit Extended to East, Viewed from Above, East to Top of Photo (Brown 2007)

A second pit, 50 by 50 cm was opened on the north-eastern end of the culvert in a slightly higher position which was to be potentially better protected from stream erosion. The pit was aligned with the tree-line on a raised edge where the edge of the culvert would be expected. This pit was 66 cm from the northern edge of the boardwalk. At a depth of 15 cm a single piece of round timber was located but the pit quickly filled with water and no other timber could be located. It is clear that the structure was no better preserved in this location. There is also no evidence of earth fill on deck logs in this location as the excavated sediment was also a fine soft organic loam.

Figure 5.28 - Location of Second Test Pit Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

The pits were filled and some large stones were placed in the western pit to prevent erosion as it had become the main part of the stream that had formed due to the heavy rains during the excavation period.

c) Interpretation

The preservation of the timbers of the excavated culvert was much worse than anticipated but it is possible to outline the construction method and materials used. This is assisted by the observations of other, eroded, culverts in the same area and archival information.

From observation, wooden culverts were constructed to cross small streams generally varying from 1 to 5 metres long but some did reach 14 metres in length. More than 80 culverts, all conforming to the same simple design, were made along the Mole Creek Track and more than half of them were built in the 15 kilometres between Oakleigh and Pelion Creeks (Simmons 1898).

Design - The culverts on the Mole Creek Tracks were constructed with the same design as bridges and are basically a simple single log beam bridge. Their design is not consistent with culvert design where deck logs span the length of the culvert and are supported from the abutments. In beam bridges the span is crossed by the beams which are supported by the abutments. The beams then support the deck.

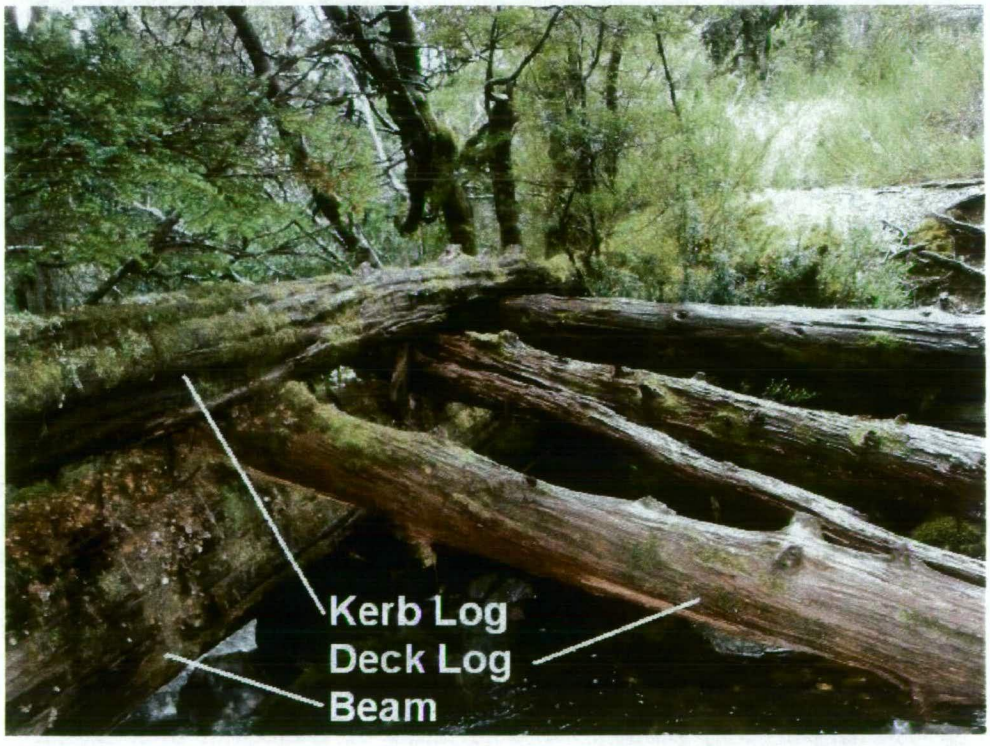

Figure 5.29 - Oakleigh Creek Culvert –Beam, Kerb Log & Deck Logs (Brown 2007)

The basic arrangement of the culverts on the Mole Creek Track was a sleeper, or bed, log laid into each bank of a stream as both a support for the culvert and

an abutment. These provided the support for the three beams of the culvert which spanned the stream, one on each side and one in the middle of the culvert. Deck logs were laid across the beams and this provided the base for the earth and stones that formed the covering of the culvert and the surface. Each side of the culvert was lined with a kerb log to restrain the deck logs and to hold the covering in place. The earth on the top of the culvert and the abutments to the culvert were built up so that there was a smooth transition from the track to the culvert.

Timber - The timber for a culvert; the beams, logs and deck; was felled nearby or from the clearing of the track. Stumps of trees cut for culverts are found within 10 metres of many culverts. Both the stumps and timber surviving in the eroded culverts are King Billy Pine and eucalypt. King Billy Pine offers advantages in straightness, strength and long life which would have made it preferable.

Figure 5.30 - Tree Stumps on Arm River Track (Brown 2004)

The only information on timber selection is an archival source, an 1886 tender, which required culverts to be '...all to be of the best stringy bark, blue gum or peppermint timber' (Public Works Department).

Preparation of Timber – The timber in the culverts is straight and without bark. The ends are pointed from being axe felled. Except for the preparation of the ends, this is largely consistent with the 1886 tender which calls for '...logs to be sound, straight, stripped of all bark, and sawn or trimmed off square at each end' (Public Works Department 1886). The spacing of the deck logs in the culvert excavated suggests that bark may have been present and the timber packed against each other when it was originally laid. Decay may have then removed the bark and sapwood

layers.

Sleeper or Bed Logs - The culverts examined on the Arm River Track section of the Mole Creek Track suggest that there was some excavation for the placement of the sleeper logs. They are found level with, or slightly above, the water level in the stream. In all cases, the sleeper logs are below the ground level of the earth abutments for the culverts. It is unclear whether they have been excavated into the stream banks, or earth has been filled in behind them, or a combination of both.

Figure 5.31 - Culvert showing Sleeper Logs (Brown)

The sleeper logs examined are full logs with axe cut ends and extend about 1 metre beyond each side of the culvert, i.e. they are about 4 metres long. The logs vary from 30 cm diameter to 70 cm diameter. Notches have been observed in the sleeper log to receive the beams.

Main Beams - Supported by the sleeper logs and across the stream was laid three main support logs. The Oakleigh Creek culvert clearly shows the three beams and many other culverts have three beams. The size of the beam logs would need to be related to the span but this has not been examined.

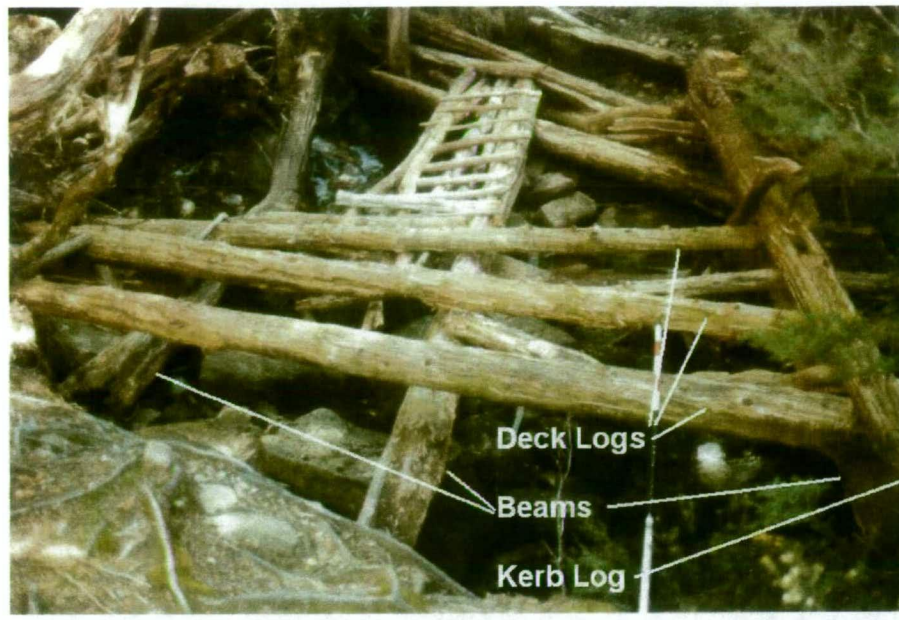

Figure 5.32 - Oakleigh Creek Culvert (Brown 2004)

Deck Logs – On the Mole Creek Track, the top covering of the culverts was a series of round timber, of various sizes ranging from 6 cm to 50 cm diameter, laid across the bridge. This was probably then covered with rock and soil to provide the surface of the track. The deck logs were sandwiched between the substantial outside beams and a smaller kerb log. The excavation showed that the top deck of the culvert was relatively closely packed beams.

Figure 5.33 - Oakleigh Creek Culvert, Viewed from East Showing Abutment and Deck Logs (Brown 2007)

Kerb Logs – These were laid on the outside of the bridge above the deck logs. The kerb logs appear to have helped contain the earth and rock laid to make the top surface of the culvert and to constrain the deck logs.

Abutments - The abutments were built up to provide a smooth transition to the culvert. At Oakleigh Creek this was built up about 50 cm. This suggests that the total depth of the gravel coverage of the deck of the culverts could be up to 50 cm.

5.2.3. Heavy Corduroy Site

a) Setting

Both sites near Lake Ayr, brush corduroy and heavy corduroy, are located on poorly drained peaty soil. These sites are classified as Eastern Alpine Sedgeland (TasVeg 2007d, e). The general area is shown in Figure 5.34.

Figure 5.34 - Sedgeland near Lake Ayr & Brush Corduroy Site, Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

Excavation of heavy corduroy was considered important as this the only location on the Mole Creek Track where it was reported by the construction gangs as being used. This location was chosen as the two parallel watercourses can be interpreted as drainage ditches defining the edges of the corduroy. The Public Works Department overseer responsible for constructing of the track reported heavy corduroy was installed at this

location. This site was interpreted in 1963 as being of '...double parallel trenches with the soil heaped to make a path between them' (Manning).

b) Examination

The heavy corduroy site, near Lake Ayr, showed some narrow rutting from bushwalking which had been recently covered by boards installed by the Parks & Wildlife Service. While the general shape of this section of corduroy appeared to be well preserved, a continuous and thick vegetation layer made it difficult to exclude the possibility that this site had been modified. The general view is shown in Figure 5.35.

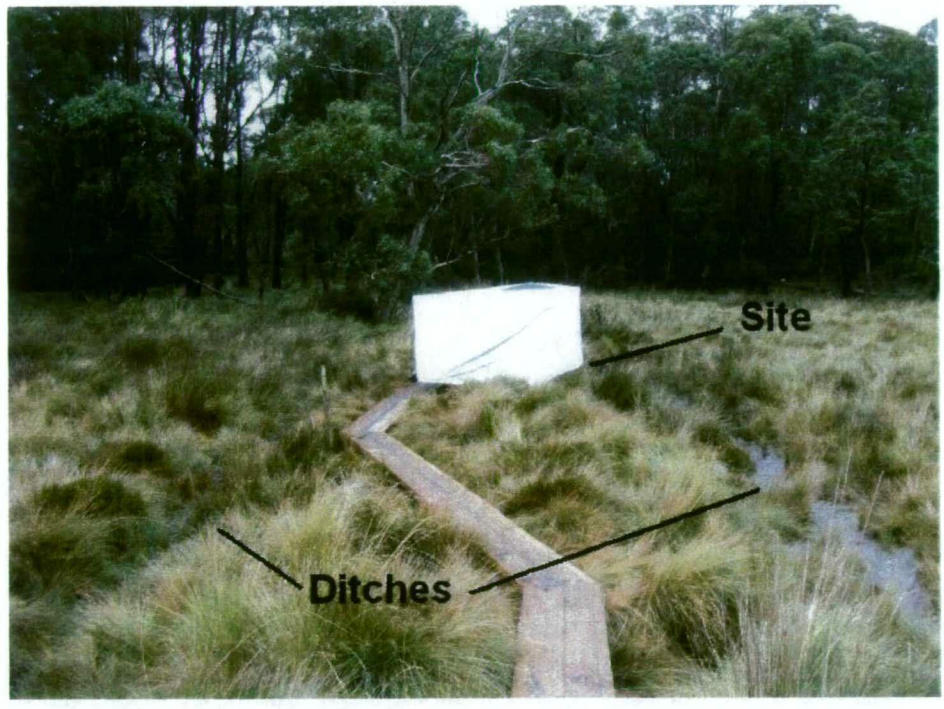

Figure 5.35 - General View of Excavation of Heavy Corduroy from West, Showing Two Parallel Ditches (Brown 2007)

Two test-pits about 20 cm square were cut between two long straight ditches. The heavy surface vegetation matting was about 10 cm thick and below was a dark black humic loam. The soil was at water level and very poorly compacted. Both holes were probed to about 70 cm without locating any significant resistance. The two pits are shown in the figure below.

Figure 5.36 - Test pits at Heavy Corduroy Location, North to Left of Photo (Brown 2007).

Limited probing with a shovel failed to find any timber within a 5 metres radius from test pits.

c) Interpretation

No timber was located at this site despite ample evidence of timber from the construction of the track in culverts in nearby streams and considerable sections of brush corduroy. Three possible explanations for the absence of the timber are; that the location of the heavy corduroy has not yet been found, the timber has rotted completely away or that the timber of the corduroy has been removed. A snarer's hut is located within 100 metres of the hut and the 1.8 metres lengths of split timber may have been reused for its construction.

The two parallel channels appear to be too linear and well aligned to be natural but they may also be a natural reaction to disturbance by cording or could be natural.

No archival information has been found on the method of construction of heavy corduroy. However, photographs of the Mole Creek Track at Tullah show sections of heavy corduroy, as in Figure 5.37. It is made of split timber about 2 metres long lain across the track. There is no earth covering of the timber. This is also illustrated in other Tasmanian photographs of the period.

Figure 5.37 - Prospector on Corduroy Section of Mole Creek Track at Tullah in 1899 (Launceston Community History 2003)

5.2.4 Brush Corduroy Site

a) Setting

The site of the brush corduroy, near Lake Ayr, was eroded and subject to recent track work by the Parks & Wildlife Service. The track in this area was braided which meant that the covering over the round timber varied from thick vegetation to no coverage at all. This site had been chosen as some timbers were exposed by one of the track braids.

Figure 5.38 - General View of Brush Corduroy Site from West (Brown 2007)

The photograph in Figure 5.39, taken at a drier time, shows the round timber at this location. The vegetation had been worn back by walkers to reveal the round timber.

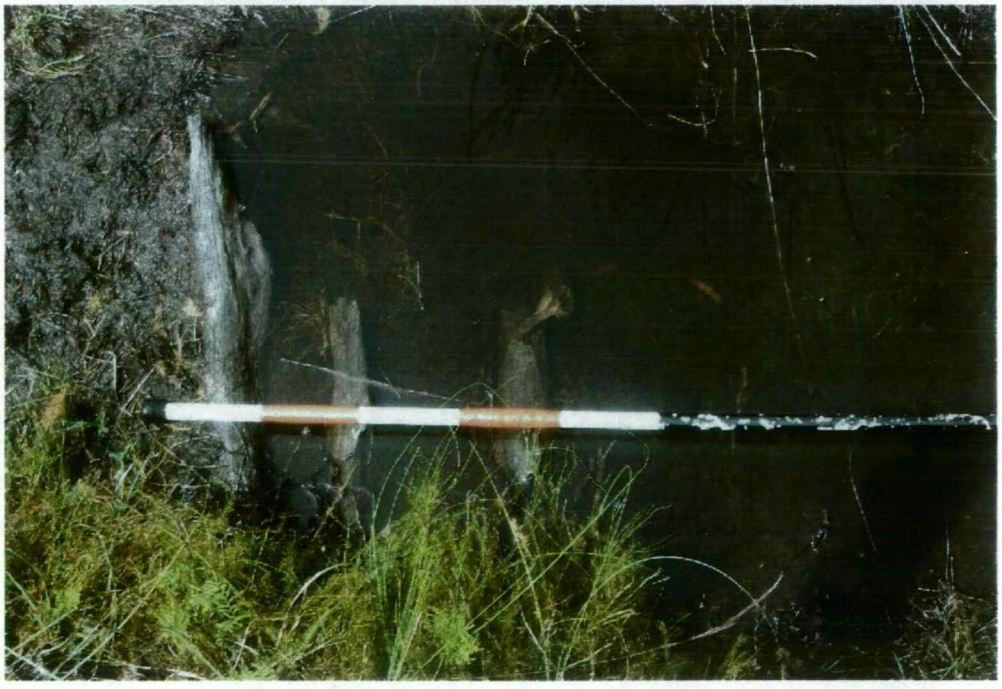

Figure 5.39 - Round Timber in Rut (Brown 2007)

b) Examination

The edge of the cording was determined by limited shallow probing over about 10 metres to determine its alignment and extent. This clearly showed a significant length of continuous cording and the generally straight alignment of the edge. The corduroy was aligned with benching on a small mound to the east and where the track emerged onto solid ground to the west. Some of the timbers seem to end about 30 cm short of line of edge.

Figure 5.40 - String Line Showing General Alignment of Edge of Corduroy, Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

A shallow trench, between 5 to 10 cm deep, was cut starting from where round wood was already exposed for a length of about2 metres. The position and size of the timbers were measured which are presented in Figure 5.43.

Figure 5.41 - Measurement of Spacing of Round Timber (Brown 2007)

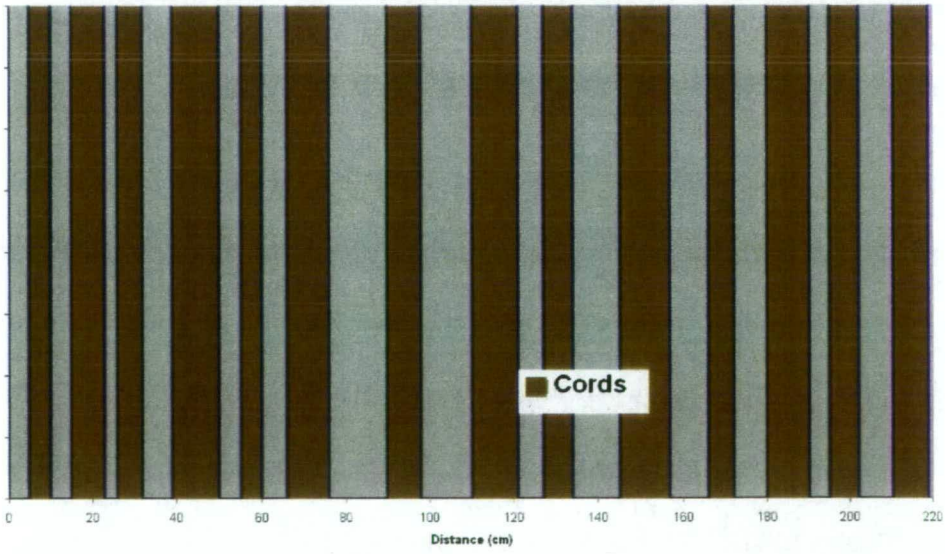

Figure 5.42 - Arrangement of Cords

The 14 cords measured varied from 5 to 12 cm diameter with an average of 8 cm. The spacing varied from 3 to 14 cm but the large spacings may be from rotted or broken cords. The average spacing between cords would appear to be between 5 and 8 cm.

c) Interpretation

The evidence seems to suggest that brush corduroy from the construction of the Mole Creek Track has been found but the later introduction of rough timber into this boggy section of track cannot be excluded. The corduroy was laid in a single layer and may have been side by side without bark removed and the bark having subsequently rotted away. It was laid to the full width of the track. It is difficult to determine whether any soil covering was placed on the corduroy.

The only historical information available relates to the construction of corduroy for road-building from 1915. It states that for brush corduroy the '...stems of the boughs should not exceed 2 in. *[5 cm]* diameter. They should be laid overlapping in shingle fashion transversely and longitudinally to the road, to a total depth of about 15 in. *[38 cm]*'. For road construction they recommended a layer of gravel about 61 cm deep (Coane 1915).

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Limitations of the Survey

All excavation sites were affected to some degree by inundation due to the heavy rain during the period of the work. The examination of the benched track sites was limited by the small size of the excavations and the very limited locations that are not significantly impacted by track maintenance and/or erosion. The culvert site was poorly preserved and had been disturbed by stream flows.

Examination of both the corduroy sites was limited by both surface visibility from thick vegetation and inundation. Very little information was obtained from the heavy corduroy site as no track timber was found and the two parallel ditches could not be positively identified as part of the track construction. The full width of the brush corduroy was not excavated to reveal all information about the round timber used. This was due to the threat of inundation for any excavations at this site.

6.2 Possible Other Artefacts

Much of the Arm River Track is an artefact that would reward further examination to further develop the insights made in this work. There are long sections of benched track in various conditions and many other culverts along the track. Some sections of the Mole Creek Track were not taken up by the Arm River Track and may be well preserved. The Arm River Track has artefacts associated with the Mole Creek Track such as tree stumps and track-cutters campsites, artefacts associated with the boundary of the Cradle Mountain Reserve such posts and cairns and fencing associated with grazing on the Pelion Plains.

In areas near the Arm River Track there are remnants of the 1891 Mole Creek & Zeehan Railway Survey. There may also be artefacts from the earlier tracks from the February Plains.

More Aboriginal artefacts are likely in the area as it was route for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal artefacts have been identified in the area.

6.3 Threats

While the Mole Creek track is robust and has endured over 100 years of weathering and use, it is now under more threat than during much of its life. This is due to the high wear rates by walkers, accelerated erosion and track maintenance by the Parks and Wildlife Service.

7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITE ASSESSMENT

7.1 Basis of Assessment

The level of significance of this site is determined in terms of a four tier system (Kerr 1996):-

A of exceptional significance
B of considerable significance
C of some significance
D of little significance

7.2 Statement of Significance

The Burra Charter has established criteria which have been widely adopted by heritage practitioners. The sites excavated can be evaluated against these criteria.

The sites, and the Mole Creek Track in general, have some aesthetic value due to their gentle curves, use of local materials, small scale of works and the softening of the track in general by over 100 years of decay and regrowth. The track appears as an organic part of the landscape. The site has aesthetic value as it fulfils the requirements of '...a considerable degree of unity in its scale, form and materials' and 'a relationship between its parts and the setting that reinforces the quality of both' (Kerr 1985).

The sites and the Mole Creek Track have considerable historic importance in its association with the period of Tasmanian history in the late 19th century where the routes to the West which was a substantial feature of Tasmanian politics and public interest at the time. The Mole Creek Track is the only, largely intact, track surviving from this period.

The track, and the sites in particular, demonstrate a distinctive aspect of Australia's cultural heritage in that track making of this type has not been practiced for about 80 years. Tracks from this period and of a substantial nature are known around Tasmania but all are subject to decay and destruction. This track is important in that it is partially protected through is presence in a World Heritage Area and no tracks are protected under Tasmanian heritage legislation.

The Mole Creek Track, as demonstrated by these excavations and the information gleaned from them, has scientific value which can be defined as the '...potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's ...cultural history' (Pearson & McGowan 2000). There is no information available, other than some archival records, which touch upon the way that these tracks were constructed. The many sections of this track that have not been destroyed by later activity, which has claimed many other tracks, provide a resource for understanding 19th century track construction. This then also establishes the Mole Creek Track as 'important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of ...a class of Australia's ... cultural places' (Pearson & McGowan 2000).

In terms of the full suite of values, this site has considerable significance for the following reasons:-

> The Mole Creek Track in general, and the sites examined in particular, have considerable significance in their associations with developments of routes to the West Coast, providing an example of the substantial Public Works Department tracks build in the late 19th century. They also have, and can still further, provide important information about how these tracks were constructed. The track has some significance in its aesthetic qualities.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Further excavations and surface examinations should be conducted to add to the results of this work.

1) A culvert near Lake Ayr appears to be in better condition than any of the others observed both in its surface shape and that it was still effective in allowing water to pass under it. This may justify closer examination and some small excavations.

2) The brush corduroy alignment, width, position and general integrity could be determined by probing near Lake Ayr. The spacing, size and alignment of the timber could be determined by examining the exposed sections of this corduroy.

3) The area of the heavy corduroy should be probed to determine whether there are any remnants and their location. This would be a necessary precursor to any further excavation in this area. The timber of the nearby snarer's hut should be examined and measured to try to determine whether it had been reused from the heavy corduroy site.

4) Surface profiles of more sections of benched track should be measured to determine the variations in construction methods.

The management of the Arm River Track should consider the historic fabric of the Mole Creek Track in this area particularly in relation to maintenance. Sections of Mole Creek Track that have been by-passed by the Arm River Track should not be incorporated into it without an assessment of the track.

9. PERSONNEL

Archaeological Supervision - Anne McConnell, Consultant – Cultural Heritage Management, Archaeology & Quaternary Geoscience, G.P.O. Box 234, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001.

Author – Peter Brown, C/O School of History and Classics, University of Tasmania, Launceston

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APPENDIX II

Examination of 1898 Mole Creek Track, Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park December 2007, April 2008

Peter Brown

Approved under Grant of Authority by Acting Regional Manager North, Parks & Wildlife Service, dated 14th March 2008

Conducted as part of Master of Arts (History), University of Tasmania, August 2008

SUMMARY

Sections of the Mole Creek Track, constructed in 1898 and 1899, were examined as part of a Masters of Arts. Corduroy and rocky benched track were surveyed and a culvert was partially excavated.

The corduroy and culverts sites were on a section of the Mole Creek Track now known as the Arm River Track in an area on the Pelion Plains at the centre of the Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park. The rocky benched track site was located near the Overland Track at Lake Windermere.

On the Arm River Track near Lake Ayr, more than 60 metres of well preserved brush corduroy, laid in 1898, was identified. The cords, round timber 2 metres long and on average 7 cm in diameter, were placed across the line of the track and about 4 cm apart. There was no evidence of the cords being covered.

Also at Lake Ayr, two parallel drainage ditches were identified which represents a method of keeping the track dry and solid not seen anywhere else on this track. These two ditches were about 80 metres long and separated by 3.5 metres.

A substantial earth covered culvert was excavated near Lake Ayr. It was in generally good condition although all its timbers had rotted. The culvert is about 10 metres long, 2 metres wide and 0.5 metres thick. The cross timbers to support the thick earth deck were a small distance apart and clay had been used to fill the gaps between the deck timbers.

The long section of rocky benched track, near Lake Windermere, was in very good condition. The bench had been formed from quartz rocks that formed the ground over which the track passed. Large rocks formed the outer edge of track and they were then filled in with smaller stones to give a more uniform track surface. The benching appeared to be made by cut and fill, where the rocks removed from the inner edge of the track to build up the outer edge. Many of the rocks appear to have been broken to make them smaller and make a smoother track surface.

The sections of track examined provided new insight into the construction of a substantial track from the end of the 19th Century. The integrity of these sites should be maintained as they are very well preserved.

Further limited excavations, profiling the ditches and a full width examination of the brush corduroy, could provide further useful information.

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Definition of Terms

Benched track: A track formed by excavating and filling to form a graded and easily negotiable path on a cross slope.

Brush corduroy: Corduroy made with small round timber either from branches of trees or bushes.

Corduroy: Timber laid transversely to the direction of travel of a track to form a solid surface over soft ground.

Culvert: An earth covered simple beam bridge across a stream or water-course.

Deck: Surface of culvert or bridge that provides support to walkers.

Grade: The amount of elevation change between two points over a given distance expressed as a percentage (metres change in elevation for every 100 horizontal metres, commonly known as "rise over run"). A track that rises 8 vertical metres in 100 horizontal metres has an 8% grade. A grade of 100% would have an angle of 45°.

Heavy corduroy: Corduroy made with hand-split timber planks.

Sideling: Describes a track which is angled across the face of a slope. The track is often cut into the slope.

Track: Pedestrian access way on natural ground or fill.

1. INTRODUCTION

This work was undertaken as part of a Master of Arts (History) on the Mole Creek Track. The Mole Creek Track, generally known as the Innes Track, runs from Liena, near Mole Creek, to Rosebery passing through what is now the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park. The Mole Creek Track was constructed by the Tasmanian Public Works Department in 1898 and 1899 in response to lobbying for a direct route from northern Tasmania to the expanding mining industry on the West Coast. Parts of it have been incorporated into the modern bushwalking tracks; the Overland Track and the Arm River Track.

In May 2007, four locations on the Mole Creek Track, near the Pelion Plains, were excavated along a section now known as the Arm River Track. These sites were examples of benched track, culverts, heavy corduroy and brush corduroy (Brown 2007). The report on these excavations recommended further work to provide more detail on the construction of culverts and corduroy.

Following from the earlier report, some further surveys were conducted in December 2007 on sites of corduroy and rocky benched track. Excavations were made in April 2008 on a culvert and corduroy after approval was obtained from the Parks and Wildlife Service in March 2008. This work is reported here.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

6.1 General Location of the Survey Areas

The sites examined in this report are near the centre of the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park on the Tasmanian Central Plateau. The general locations are shown in Figure 2.1 and in more detail in Figure 2.2. The corduroy and culvert sites are near Lake Ayr on the Pelion Plains which are situated between the headwaters of the Mersey and Forth Rivers. Here the Mole Creek Track has been partially incorporated in the Arm River Track, a modern bushwalking track which provides access to the Overland Track.

The site of the rocky benched track is located about 750 metres south west of the Lake Windermere hut which is about 18 kilometres south of Cradle Mountain along the Overland Track.

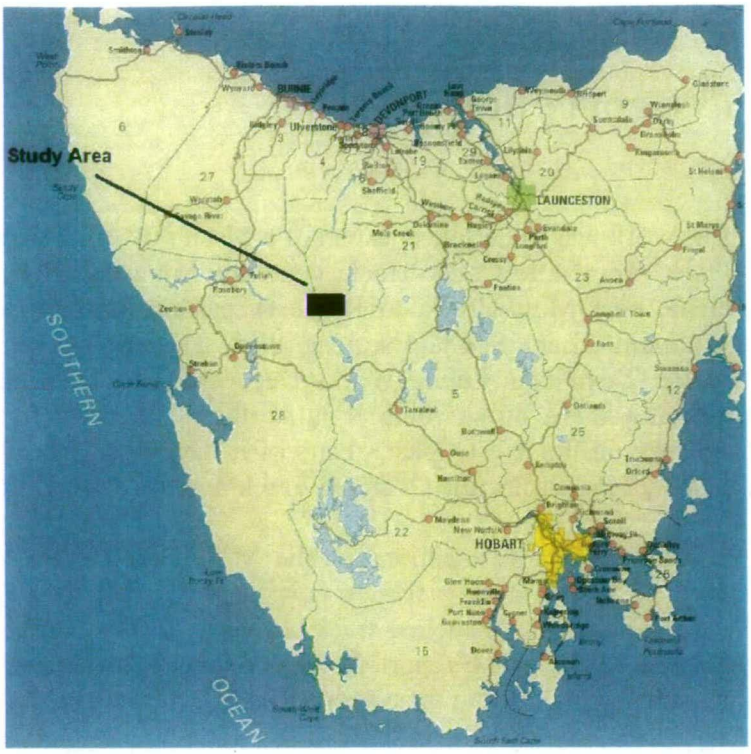

Figure 2.1 - General Location of Sites

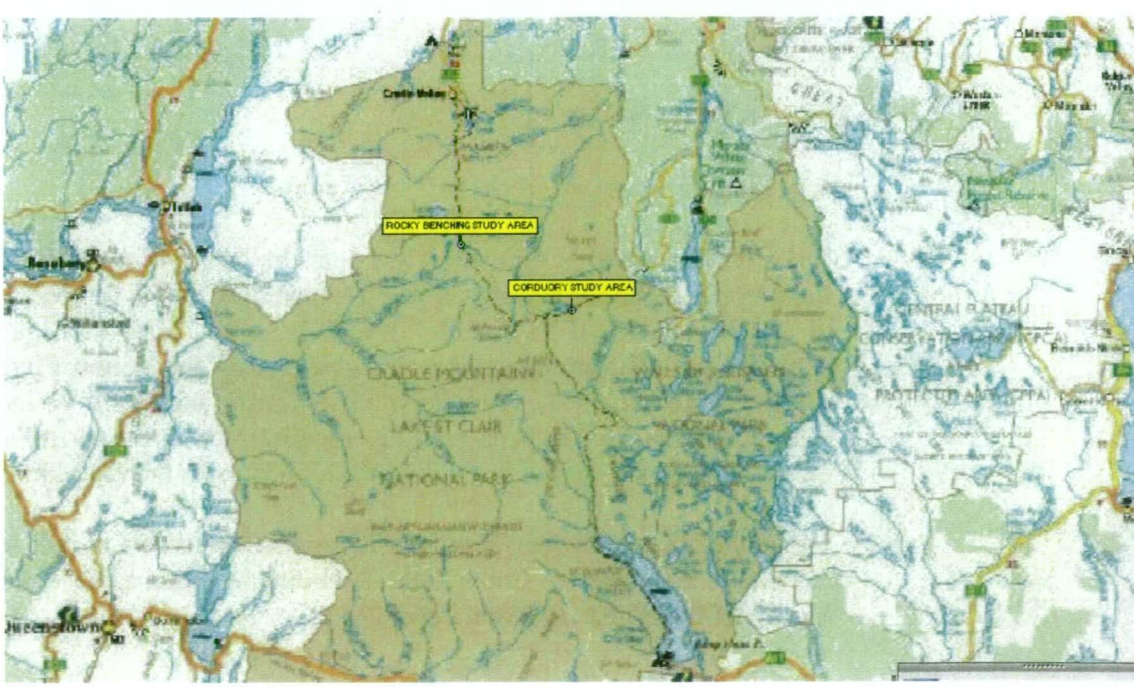

Figure 2.2 – Location of Sites

6.2 Location of Sites

Seven sites were chosen to examine heavy corduroy, brush corduroy, culvert and rocky benched track. Their locations are given in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 – Survey Sites

Location Name	Grid Reference	Description
Heavy Corduroy	[4 23,740E 53 69,820N GDA 94]	420 m east of Lake Ayr
Brush Corduroy 1	[4 23,700E 53 69,800N GDA 94]	350 m east of Lake Ayr
Brush Corduroy 2	[4 23,400E 53 69,670N GDA 94]	90 m south east of Lake Ayr
Brush Corduroy 3	[4 23,340E 53 69,595N GDA 94]	120 m south east of Lake Ayr
McCoy's Hut	[4 23,730E 53 69,530N GDA 94]	440 m south east of Lake Ayr
Culvert	[4 23,175E 53 69,500N GDA 94]	150 m south of Lake Ayr
Rocky Benched Track	[4 12,690E 53 74,420N GDA 94]	1 km south of Lake Windermere

The locations are shown on the 1:25,000 maps CATHEDRAL (Tasmap 1988), refer to Figure 2.3, and WILL (Tasmap 1989), refer to Figure 2.4.

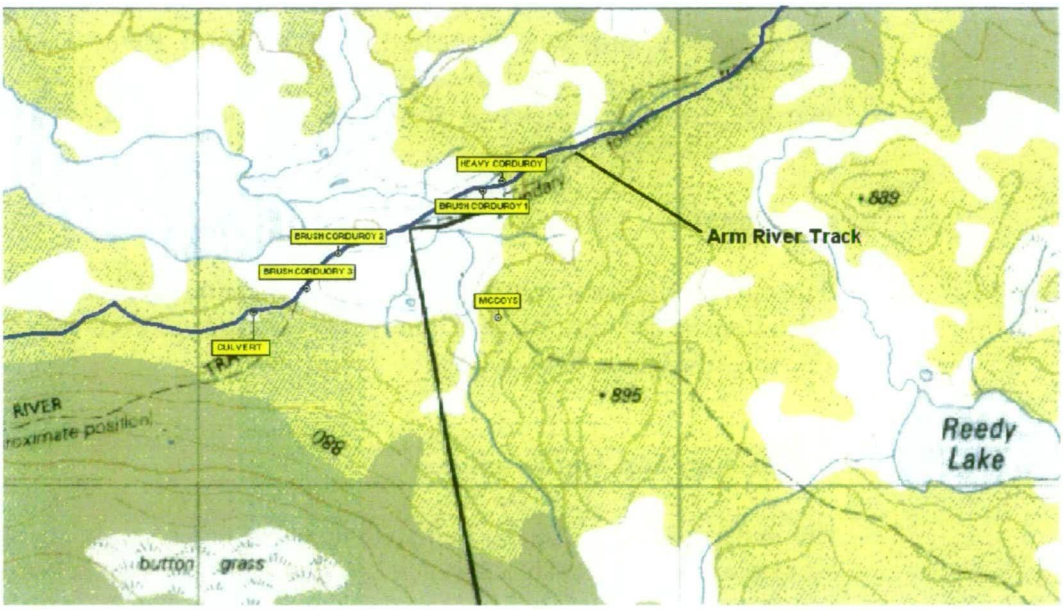

Figure 2.3 Locations of Corduroy & Culvert Sites (Tasmap 1988)

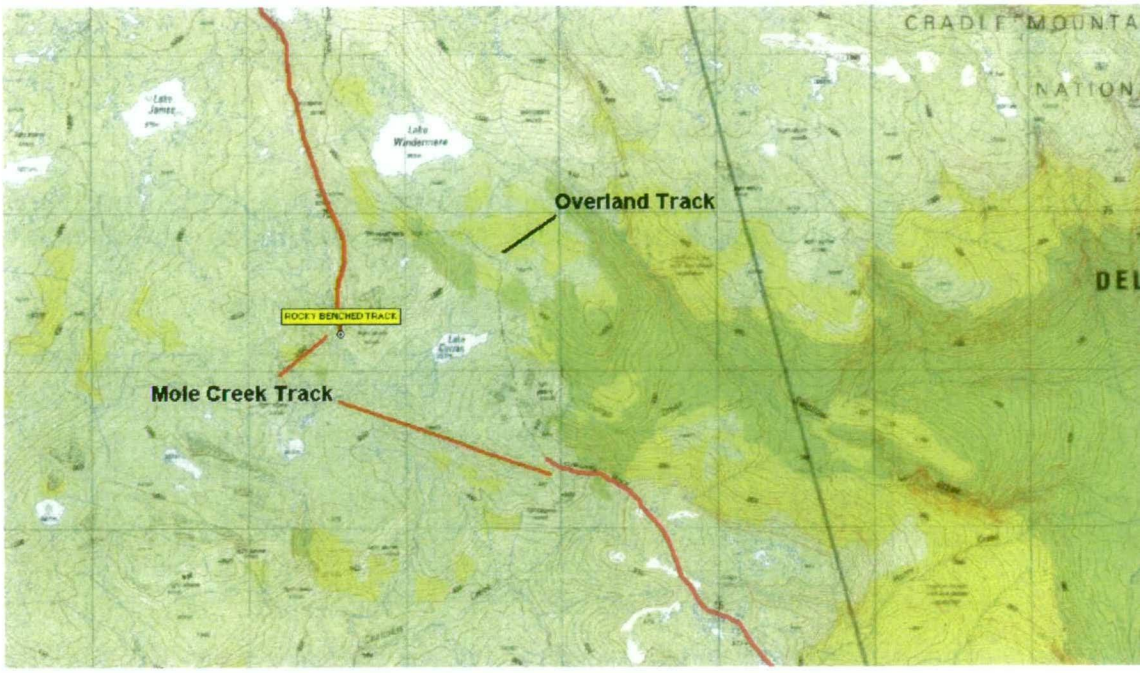

Figure 2.4 Location of Rocky Benched Track (Tasmap 1989)

The corduroy sites were accessed from the Arm River Track. The total distance from the start of the Arm River Track is about 8 km. The rocky benched track site was accessed from the Overland Track and is about 18 km from Cradle Mountain.

6.3 Climate

The survey sites are in a remote highland location subject to severe weather conditions at any time of year. Snow falls occur here even in summer months (Bureau of Meteorology 2007).

6.4 Geology and Topography

The general geology of the Pelion Plains was described in the report on the excavations conducted in May 2007 (Brown 2007). The Pelion Plains, at an altitude of 800 metres, is dominated to the north by the Oakleigh Range and to the south by Mounts Pelion East, Doris and Ossa. The plains fall away to the west into the valley of the Forth River and to the east to the valley of the Mersey River.

The area near Lake Windermere is part of the dissected plateau between Mount Pelion West and Cradle Mountain. This has been cut by glaciation to form a series of shallow valleys running east to west across the plateau. The rocky benched track site lies in a narrow creek valley on the western side of a long ridge with Lake Windermere on its eastern side. The track rises from the valley containing Lake Curran at an attitude of 950 metres to the ridge line at an altitude of 1020 metres.

6.5 Vegetation

At the eastern end of the Pelion Plains, in the poorly drained soils around Lake Ayr, are woodlands of *Eucalyptus coccifera* (Tasmanian snow gum) and *Eucalyptus gunnii* (cider gum) with significant scrubby understoreys. The low laying and water-logged plain on the south-eastern edge of the lake is covered by Eastern Alpine and Highland Grassy Sedgelands and High Poa Grassland with isolated *Eucalyptus coccifera* woodlands on slightly elevated and better drained soils (Tasveg 2007).

The rocky benched track site near Lake Windermere is in an area designated as *Nothofagus gunnii* rainforest and scrub. Here the rainforest and scrub form a mosaic with alpine heathlands (TasVeg 2008).

2.6 Disturbance to the Survey Area

Much of the Arm River Track was constructed as the Mole Creek Track and as such has been in use since 1898. In many places, the track has been subject to considerable disturbance by more than 100 years of erosion and decay. In its earlier days, it has been exposed to wear from cattle driven to the Pelion Plains. Summer grazing on the Pelion Plains largely ceased with the proclamation of the Scenic Reserve in the 1930s. Its use by bushwalkers increased when it was re-cleared in 1963 and has become a well used access route to the Pelion Plains for bush-walkers. In 2004-05 up to 3,000 walkers used the Arm River Track (Parks and Wildlife Service 2006). Additional disturbance has been the result of maintenance and modification by the Parks and Wildlife Service including excavation of parts of the track structure for drains, adding rocks to the track surface and the addition of surface boarding.

The rocky benched track site near Lake Windermere shows no signs of being disturbed since it was constructed in 1899. The area around Lake Windermere was intensely prospected, largely for copper in the period between 1893 and 1900. The Mole Creek Track was abandoned in this area as the Overland Track, in use since 1931, follows a route closer to Lake Windermere.

7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

7.1 Historical Background

A detailed historical background of the Pelion Plains area was given in the previous report (Brown 2007).

Copper deposits were first found at Lake Windermere in 1893 by Joseph Will but the area boomed as a prospective mineral field after the completion of the Mole Creek Track in 1899 with a large area being claimed under mineral leases (McIntosh Reid 1919). Despite some superficial prospecting consisting of trenches and pits, and renewed interest in 1907, there was no significant discovery of minerals and the field was largely abandoned by 1920 (McIntosh Reid 1919). There was some grazing of cattle in this area. Lake Windermere,

and the old hut constructed during the prospecting period, became part of the route of the Overland Track in 1931 (Haygarth 1998).

3.2 Archaeological Background

The only historical archaeological site survey carried out previously in these areas was the earlier work by this author (Brown 2007). The Mole Creek Track, often called the Innes Track and including the current Arm River Track, was briefly described under the Regional Forestry Agreement (Pearson & Young 1997).

8. METHODOLOGY

8.1 Procedure Prior to Field Work

The work described here was recommended in the report on the surveys conducted in May 2007 by this author. The route of the Mole Creek Track across a plain near Lake Ayr had been established with some certainty by identifying a series of original features. These were sections of benched track at the eastern end of the plain, on a small hillock in the plain and at the western end of the plain. Some corduroy had been identified at the western end of the plain in the survey in May 2007 which was aligned with these sections of benched track. Corduroy in this area was part of the original construction of the track as reported by the Public Works Department overseer, Broomhall in 1898 (Broomhall).

Approval was sought from the Parks & Wildlife Service for excavations near Lake Ayr and this was granted on 14 March 2008, attached in Appendix 1.

The location of the rocky benched track was first estimated by mineral surveys from the 1890s and then confirmed by field work.

8.2 Field Procedure

The methodology proposed to examine the sites aimed to minimise disturbance while gaining useful information. The corduroy locations were probed to a total depth of about 1 metre with a probe of approximately 2 mm diameter. Two small excavations were made at a corduroy site and at the culvert site. A very shallow, less than 5 cm, excavation was made at another corduroy site to delineate some exposed cords. All excavations were filled after the work and compacted to a similar degree as originally found. Measurements were made of timbers at McCoy's Hut without disturbing any of the structure.

All information was recorded in a field note book, which was transcribed into a typed note. Locations were determined using a hand-held GPS generally working with an accuracy of about 10 metres.

The field work was conducted on 26th and 27th December 2007and 30th April 2008.

5. RESULTS

4.3 Surface Visibility and Area Surveyed

The corduroy sites at Lake Ayr had a near continuous grass cover comprising tussocks and finer grasses. Some round timber was exposed at two of the sites due to erosion from walkers following the Arm River Track, as shown in Figure 5.13. Much of the ground is water-logged and, despite little rain during the period before the survey, some of the round timber in the wear ruts was submerged. The type of the vegetation in this area indicates that most of the plain is permanently water-logged. Boardwalk was installed by Parks & Wildlife Service in April 2007 across the wetter sections of the track on the plain. The total area surveyed was 200 m^2 and the total area excavated was approximately 1 m^2.

The rocky benched track site near Lake Windermere was partially overgrown but much of the track was clearly visible. The area surveyed in detail was approximately 4 m^2.

4.4 Site Descriptions

5.2.1 Corduroy Sites

a) Setting

The sites near Lake Ayr, brush corduroy and heavy corduroy, are on a poorly drained small plain situated at the south-eastern corner of Lake Ayr. The vegetation types at these sites are classified as Eastern Alpine Sedgeland and Highland Poa Grassland (TasVeg 2007).

The Arm River Track largely follows the route of the Mole Creek Track after it crosses Wurragarra Creek. It descends, at a gentle grade of 4.5%, from the February Plains to the Pelion Plains, near Lake Ayr. The Arm River Track emerges from an open eucalypt forest onto a broad open, water-logged plain and follows a modern boardwalk, see Figures 5.1 & 5.2.

The track crosses 140 metres of open wet ground on boardwalk until it reaches the first of a series of small hillocks. Two small streams are crossed, the first at the start of the boardwalk, runs into the plain, and the second, near the end of the boardwalk, drains from the plain toward Lake Ayr. The track becomes a meandering rut as it follows the southern edge of the first hillock which is covered in Tasmanian Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus coccifera)* woodland, Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.1– Plain Viewed From Track at Eastern End (Brown 2008)

Figure 5.2 – Highland Pao Grassland near Lake Ayr and Heavy Corduroy Site, Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

Figure 5.3 – Modern Track Boardwalk, Brush Corduroy Site 1 and First Hillock (Brown 2007)

The track crosses this small hillock, another small poorly-drained area and a small creek to reach a second hillock, Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 – Track Between First and Second Small Hillocks, Looking West (Brown 2008)

The track, again as a rut with only a few small sections of benching, follows the southern edge of the second hillock for 100 metres, Figure 5.5

Figure 5.5 – Rutted Track on Second Hillock, Looking West (Brown 2008)

About 30 metres of poorly drained Eastern Alpine Sedgeland is crossed to reach a third small hillock, Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 – Corduroy Site 2, Third Hillock and Track, Looking West (Brown 2008)

The track is clearly benched into the southern edge of this drier ground for 74 metres before it passes over about 90 metres of poorly drained ground covered in Eastern Alpine Sedgeland, see Figures 5.7 and 5.8. The track enters generally drier ground on the southern side of Lake Ayr covered in a light eucalypt forest.

Figure 5.7 - Benched Track, Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

Figure 5.8- Sedgeland near Lake Ayr & Brush Corduroy 3 Site, Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

b) Heavy Corduroy Site

The possible heavy corduroy site on the eastern end of the plain had been probed and two small excavations made in May 2007 without locating any corduroy. This area is marked by two parallel, straight, ditches which are 80 metres long and uniformly 3.5 metres apart.

During this work, the area between the parallel ditches was probed over their full length of about 80 metres to a depth of 1 metre at approximately 1 metre intervals. A transverse was made at a point approximately in the centre of the length of the ditches, adjacent to a tree in the northern ditch. The profile of the track was also measured, Figure 5.10. The ground was probed for a distance of about 5 metres of either side of the ditches, which is a total 15 metres, see Figure 5.9.

The probing failed to identify solid material in the soil other than a few isolated obstructions.

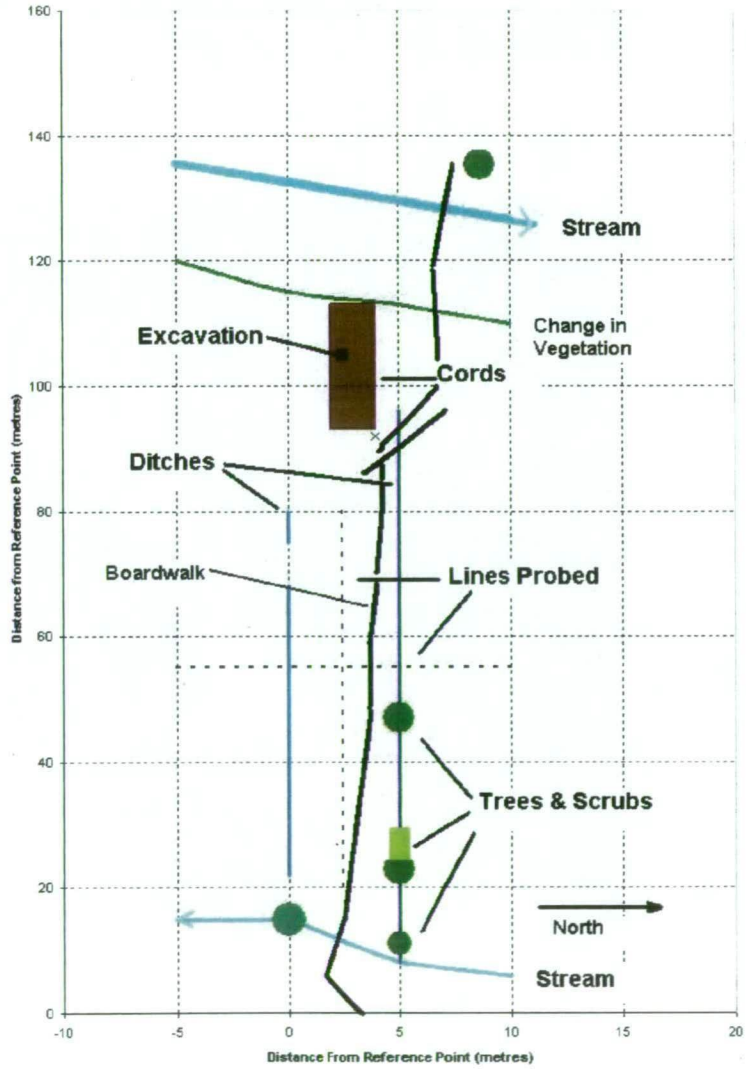

Figure 5.9 - Layout of Heavy Corduroy and Brush Corduroy Site 1

The surface profile of a section across the track was measured across the middle of the line of ditches.

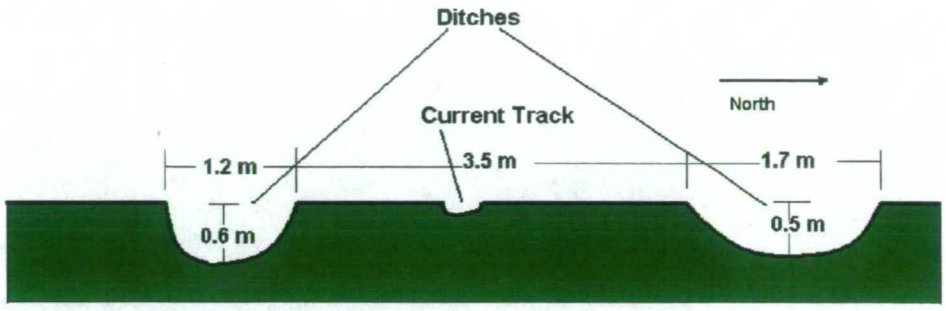

Figure 5.10 - Surface Profile of Ditches, North to the right

c) Brush Corduroy Site 1

The area immediately west of the heavy corduroy site, and aligned with its ditches, was examined. An area of approximately 5 metres by 30 metres was probed. Subsurface objects consistent with corduroy were encountered about 300 mm under the current vegetation surface. The total extent was 20 metres by about 2 metres and aligned with the parallel ditches as shown in Figure 5.9 and 5.11.

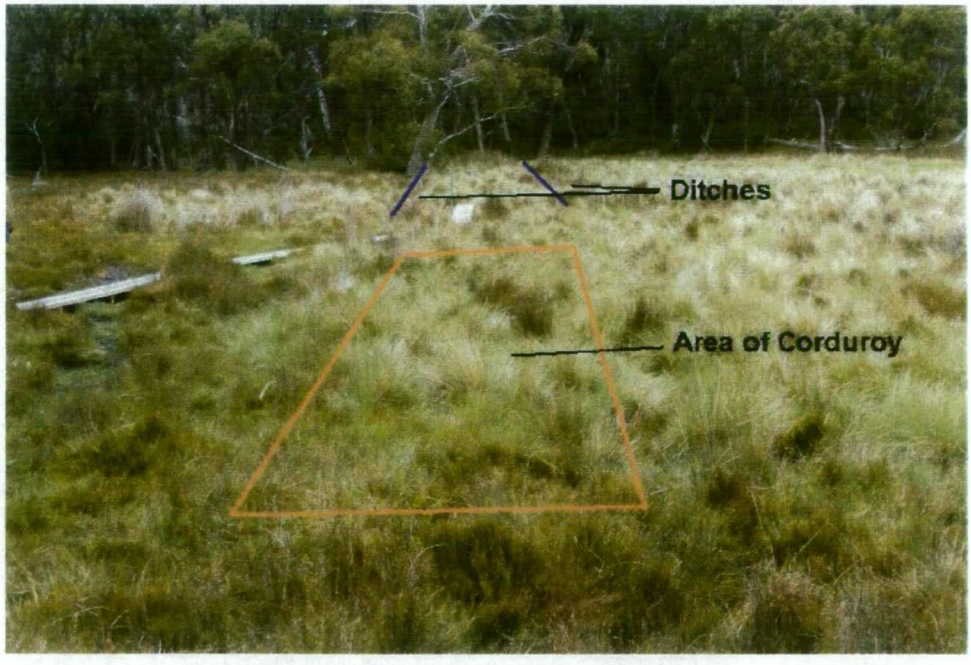

Figure 5.11 - Brush Corduroy Site 1, Extent of Corduroy, Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

An excavation, approximately 5 cm square, was made near the centre of the corded area, Figure 5.12. The soil removed was dark humic material. Water was encountered at about 30 cm below the surface of the ground. A piece of round timber was 5 cm below the water level. It was determined by feel to be aligned across the line of the corduroy and approximately 5 cm in diameter.

Figure 5.12 - Excavation in Brush Corduroy Site 1 (Brown 2008)

d) Brush Corduroy Site 2

Towards the western side of the plain, a number of round timbers had been exposed in a rut worn by bushwalkers, Figure 5.13. This was in a low-laying section of ground between two small hillocks, shown in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.13 – Brush Corduroy Site 2, Exposed Brush Corduroy, Orange String Shows Edge of Corduroy (Brown 2007)

The ground was probed to delineate the extent of the round timbers. The soil coverage of the round timbers was between zero and 10 cm. The corduroy extended for an area of about 24 metres by 2 metres and was aligned with benching on its western end and a track rut on its eastern end as shown in Figure 5.14.

Figure 5.14 - Brush Corduroy Site 2, Area of Corduroy Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

d) Brush Corduroy Site 3

Further exposed round timber had been located at the western side of the plain. These had been examined in May 2007. Probing of this area commenced at a location where round timbers were exposed. A total area of the corduroy is 20 metres long by 2 metres wide. This was aligned with benching on the eastern end and a track rut on the western end, as shown in Figure 5.15 and 5.16. It is also along the line of the old track rut formed by bushwalkers.

Figure 5.15 - Brush Corduroy Site 3, Area of Corduroy, Viewed from West (Brown 2007)

Figure 5.16 - Brush Corduroy Site 3, Area of Corduroy Viewed from East (Brown 2007)

Some of the exposed round timbers were further delineated by some shallow excavations over a distance of 1.5 metres, as shown in figure 5.17. The average timber size was about 6 cm and the spacing between the timbers was on average 8 cm.

Figure 5.17 – Detail of Corduroy Exposed (Brown 2008)

f) McCoy's Hut

A collapsed snarer's hut, known as McCoy's Hut, is located on the south eastern side of the plain near Lake Ayr. This was examined to determine size of timbers compared to the timbers expected from heavy cording of the Mole Creek Track.

Figure 5.18 – McCoy's Hut, Wall Timbers (Brown 2007)

The hut is completely collapsed. The timbers of the walls are approximately 10 mm thick, 100 mm wide and about 2 metres long.

g) Interpretation

Heavy Corduroy

No evidence of heavy corduroy was located despite Overseer Broomhall reporting that 180 metres had been laid along the track near Lake Ayr in 1898. The general arrangement of heavy corduroy can be seen in the picture of the Mole Creek Track at Tullah taken in 1899, Figure 5.19 below. It was made of split timber about 2 metres long lain across the track without an earth covering. This is consistent with other Tasmanian photographs of the period. If heavy corduroy was still present along the line of the track it would have been found during this survey. The possibilities are that the heavy cords have been removed, are deeply buried or have rotted away.

Figure 5.19 - Prospector on Corduroy Section of Mole Creek Track at Tullah in 1899 (Launceston Community History 2003)

Although possible, it seems unlikely that the cords may have been removed for the use at McCoy's Hut which is 250 metres from the track. The timbers of the hut are too smoothly finished and too thin to be heavy corduroy but they could have been split from them. They may have also been used for fuel at the hut. However, it is likely that all the timber and fuel for the hut were sourced from trees near to the hut as shown by a great number of tree stumps within 20 metres of the hut.

It is also unlikely that the heavy corduroy is deeply buried and was not detected during this survey. While it appears that heavy corduroy would be used in the areas with the wettest, less supportive, soil and thus be more prone to sinking or being covered over, it does not appear to be the case here. Brush corduroy was detected to the edge of the where the heavy corduroy should have been found. That is in the wetter soils at the western ends of Brush Corduroy Site 1 and Site 3. Brush corduroy was detected 35 cm below the soil surface at Brush Corduroy Site 1 and the ground was probed to about 50 cm deep.

The most likely explanation is that the timbers had rotted away completely. This was due to the combination of using less durable timber, which had been rendered even less durable as it had been split, and being laid on the soil surface where the rate of decay is accelerated. The timber available nearby is eucalypt rather then the more durable King Billy Pine which survives in other locations on the track, such as the culvert at Oakleigh Creek (Brown 2007). The durability of the heavy cords was further reduced by splitting whereas the surviving timber in the brush corduroy and culverts is all whole spars, logs or branches. Being laid on the surface means that timber decays more quickly than under water, in anaerobic conditions, where the oxygen level to support decay is much lower. Heavy corduroy cannot be expected to be found by any further searches in this area.

Ditches

The evidence of these surveys and excavations suggests that the Heavy Corduroy Site was not constructed with corduroy. It appears that it was made as a type of causeway formed by ditches on either side to incept water and the material dug out from the ditches used to raise the level of the track between the ditches. Such a construction method has not been seen elsewhere on the Mole Creek Track.

The evidence for this interpretation is the two artificial ditches, one on each side of the track, and this being an appropriate construction method on the firmer ground on the edge of the plain. The ditches, although not excavated at this stage, are too well formed, too straight and too well aligned with each other and other sections of the track to be natural. Even though this is marshy ground, it is not as soft as that in other places of the plan and would not justify the work involved in forming corduroy.

The effectiveness of this causeway is attested, even 100 years after construction, by the limited penetration of the ground by the rut formed from modern bushwalkers.

Brush Corduroy

The extent and arrangement of brush corduroy on this plain was determined by this survey. About 64 metres of brush corduroy has been located in three locations across this plain. Overseer Broomhall reported 80 metres of light brush corduroy. The corduroy located is highly likely

to be from the original construction of the track as it is across the full width of the track, on the line of the track and laid in continuous sections in a regular manner. It would be expected that had it been introduced later by other users then it would not be constructed with such care.

The three sections of corduroy were found to be 2 metres wide and the cords lay across the direction of the track. 26 cords were measured which are all round timber between 4 and 12 cm in diameter, with an average diameter of 7 cm. While the average gap between the cords is 8 cm but some of the larger gaps are considered to have been due to missing cords, then the original spacing can be considered to be 6 cm on average. It seems that, even when a bark coating is considered to have been originally present, the cords were not laid directly against each other.

It is difficult to determine definitely whether the cords were covered by soil during construction. All sections of corduroy are now covered by vegetation or soil but the coverage in sites 2 and 3 is quite shallow whereas coverage at Site 1 is about 35 cm. At Site 1, the covering is a dark humic material and the cords are below the water table even during the relatively dry time that they were examined. It is likely in this case that these cords have been covered by sediment from a nearby stream over the last 100 years. The shallow Sites 1 & 2 are not near any streams and thus sedimentation may have been limited.

The only historical information available relates to the construction of corduroy for road-building from 1915. It states that for brush corduroy the '...stems of the boughs should not exceed 2 in. *[5 cm]* diameter. They should be laid overlapping in shingle fashion transversely and longitudinally to the road, to a total depth of about 15 in. *[38 cm]*'. For road construction they recommended a layer of gravel about 61 cm deep (Coane 1915). These cords appear not to have been constructed to this standard. Given that the cords appear not to have been laid directly against each other, it is likely that there was a soil covering but this appears to have been quite shallow.

Choice of Construction Method for Location

Examining the track across this plain holistically provides insight into the use of difference construction methods in response to varying ground conditions. The line of the track was chosen to maximise the use of the low, but dry, hillocks at this end of Lake Ayr. The track follows their southern sides. The methods used here are; minimal formation, benched track, drains, brush corduroy and heavy corduroy.

Minimal formation was used on the dry hillocks with minimal slope across the line of the track. This is observed in hillocks 1 and 2 and is shown in Figures 5.5 & 5.6. Sections like this are very difficult to find due to the limited surface disturbance but they can be located by their alignment with more substantially formed sections and the presence of a modern walkers' rut. This standard of construction on the Mole Creek Track was called

"rough forming on level' by the Public Works Department overseer, Broomhall.

Benched track was made on the dry hillocks where there was a significant cross slope. Examples of this are on the eastern side of the plain, hillock 2 and hillock 3 and are shown in Figure 5.7. Such sections of track are relatively easy to locate due to the substantial surface modification due to benching. This was called 'sidling cutting' by the PWD overseer.

Drains were cut on the edge of the plain where the wet ground had some integrity and redirecting water away would improve the strength of the soil. The section on the eastern end of the plain, called inaccurately the Heavy Corduroy Site, is shown in Figure 5.2. There is reference in some of the construction notes of 'cutting away peat' but none was reported for this area. There is no mention of adding drains in this area.

Brush corduroy was laid from the edge of better drained ground and appears to have been used when there was some support in the soil structure. It was not laid in the wetter ground near the streams. Brush corduroy was located on the western end of the drains, between hillocks 2 and 3 and on the western side of hillock 3. Overseer Broomhall reported 80 metres of 'light brush corduroy' in this area.

The location of the heavy corduroy can be estimated from the absence of other track formation on very wet ground. This is the sections around the creeks on this plain. This distance represents about 140 metres which should be compared to the 180 metres reported as being formed by the overseer in 1898.

The overall use of the different construction methods are shown in the Figure 5.20 below which shows vegetation types. The vegetation type varies from eucalypt forest, DCO, on the driest ground to sedgeland, HSE, and poa grassland, GPH, present on the wetter ground

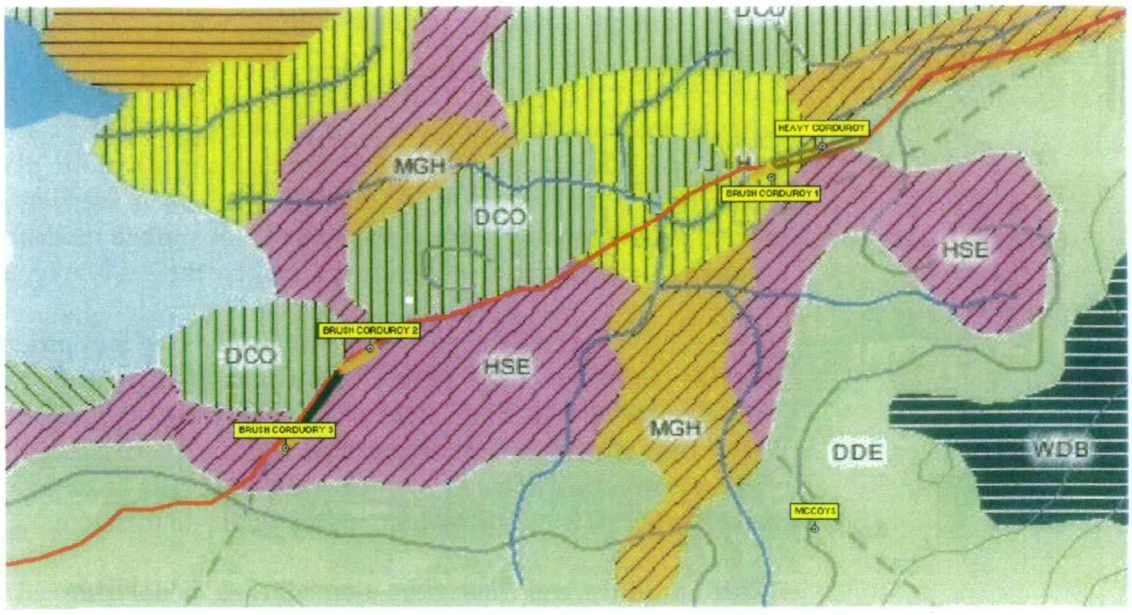

Figure 5.20 – Track Construction in Relation to Vegetation Types

5.2.2 Culvert Site

a) Setting

The Arm River Track rises from plain at the south-eastern cover of Lake Ayr onto well drained ground covered by light forest with an understorey of small scrubs. About 150 metres from the plain, the track crosses a small gully about 3 metres deep and 10 metres wide. It first passes through a small cutting, about 40 cm deep, in one side of the gully, crosses an embankment and then rises up the opposite side of the gully before it passes through another shallow cutting. The top of the embankment and the western side of the gully are shown in Figure 5.21 below. Both the cuttings and the embankment are about 2 metres wide at the base but the eroded track from the passage of bushwalkers is narrow, about 50 cm wide, and meanders over the width of the track to avoid regrowth around the track. The water flow in the gully is from the south (left in Figure 5.21) to the north towards Lake Ayr.

Figure 5.21 - Culvert Site, Looking West (Brown 2008)

b) Examination

A rut about 5 cm deep has formed along the line of the current path of bushwalkers. There is evidence of erosion in this rut and the deposition of sediments at the middle of the embankment and down the northern side of the embankment.

From the southern side of the gully, the embankment is about 40 cm above the level of the vegetation cover in the gully and rises from the gully to the track surface over about 30 cm. The track surface is partially covered by scrubs and grasses but the narrow section is bare due to erosion by walkers. There is no rutting of the track surface in the middle of the embankment. A shallow drain, about 2 cm deep, had been cut into the top of embankment leading to the northern side. This appears to be part of recent track maintenance. The track is about 2 metres wide. The northern side of the embankment has a continuous vegetation cover and slopes to the bottom of the gully over a little more than 1 metre.

Two pits, 50 cm square, were cut into the track in the middle of the gully at the highest point in the embankment. The first pit was on the northern edge of the track, as shown in Figure 5.22. This pit was abandoned after it had been dug to about 4 cm due to the presence of substantial tree roots which made further excavation impossible with the tools at hand.

Figure 5.22 – Area of First Excavation, Viewed from West (Brown 2008)

A second pit was cut about 2 cm south of the original pit into the top of the track. The pit was dug to a total depth of 70 cm where the water table was encountered preventing further meaningful excavation.

Figure 5.23 – Excavation Pits, Viewed from East (Brown 2008)

Figure 5.24 – Embankment Viewed from North (Brown 2008)

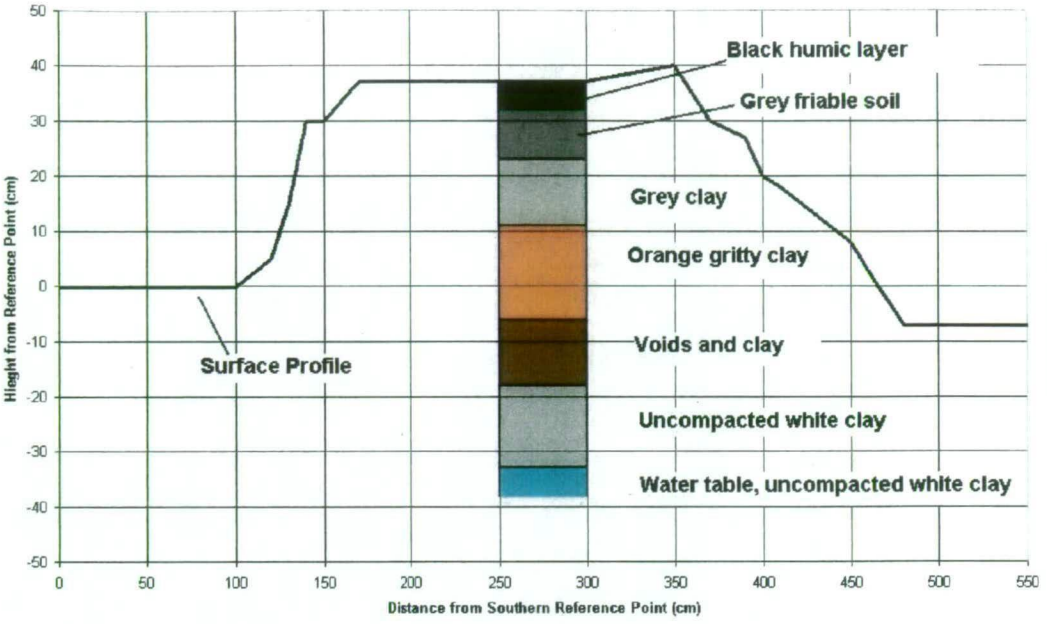

Figure 5.25 - Profile of Track and Stratigraphy (North to Right of Diagram)

The main pit sunk into the surface of the track was 5 cm square. The first 5 cm was a dark wet humic soil which was covered with a layer of leaf litter. This appeared to be decaying vegetable matter. Between 5 and 14 cm from the track surface was a layer of dry compact grey friable soil which contained many small roots. From 14 to 26 cm from the track surface was a very dense layer of compact light grey clay. This contained a large tree root.

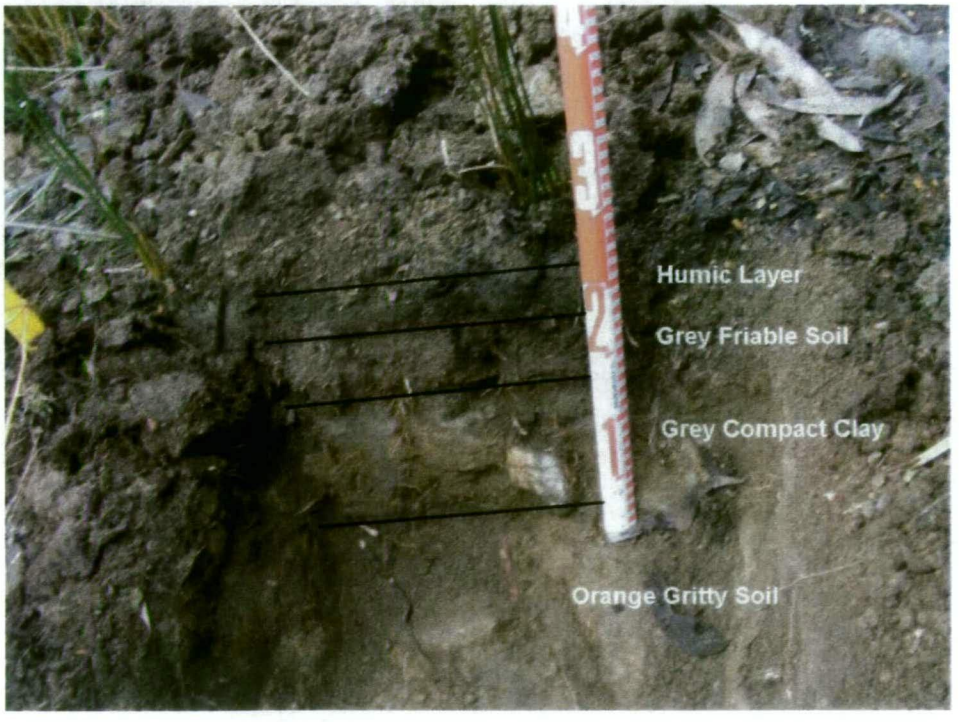

Figure 5.26 - Excavation at 26 cm Level, Eastern Side

The transitions between each layer were distinct and level. A number of small stones were encountered 26 cm below the track surface. This was a layer of orange friable gritty soil containing some clay that continued to about 43 cm below the surface of the track. It was interspersed with fine roots.

The layer encountered between 43 and 55 cm below the track surface was compact white clay covering a series of linear voids running across the line of the track. These voids, or areas of very loosely compacted material, were filled with a lot of very fine roots. Three of these linear features, about 5 - 10 cm wide, ran across the bottom of the pit with compact clay filling the remainder of the volume of this layer.

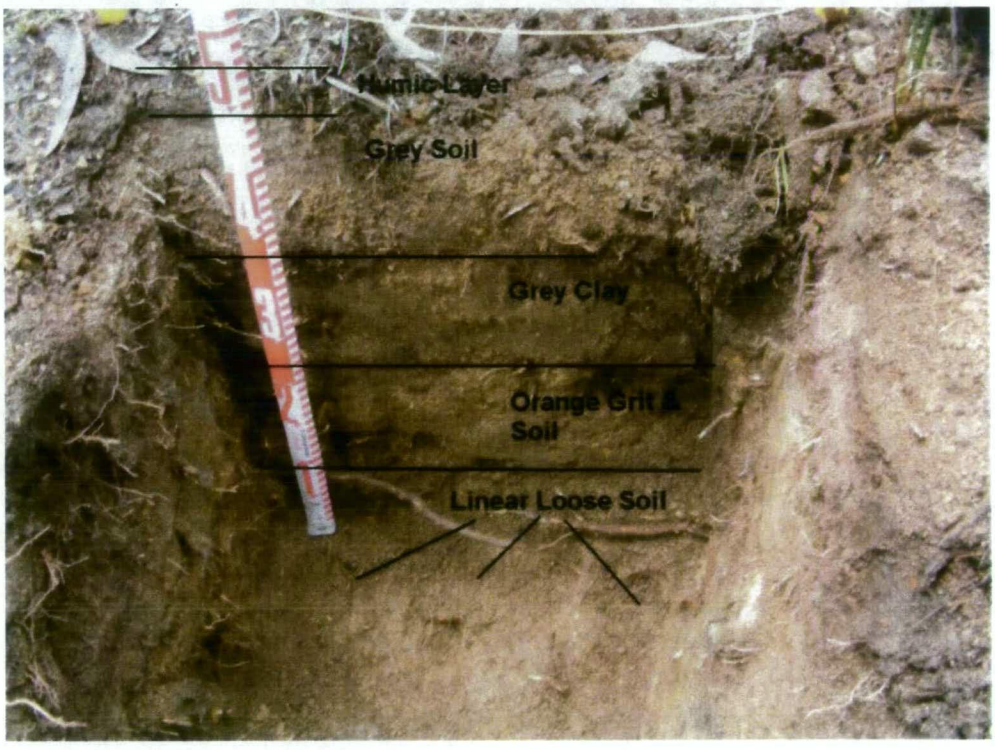

Figure 5.27 - Excavation at 43 cm Level, Northern Edge (Brown 2008)

Below 55 cm below the surface of the track was very loose white clay. The bottom of this layer was not located due to inundation of the pit at a level of 70 cm below the track surface. The layer did continue below 75 cm but was not probed to determine its full thickness.

Figure 5.28 - Excavation at 70 cm Level, Northern Face (Brown 2008)

c) Interpretation

This embankment represents a timber culvert that had been constructed with a thick earth covering. It is likely that the construction method followed that of other culverts observed along this section of track, however, all timbers have rotted leaving voids or areas with minimal compaction. The areas where the main support beams would have been expected were not excavated. The timber decking, while it had completely rotted away, was shown by the presence of the voids running across the line of the track. It appears that clay was used between and over the decking timbers to block the gaps between the timbers and form the basis for the earth covering of the deck.

The culvert was originally set above the level of the bottom of the gully but sedimentation of over 40 cm on the up stream side and 30 cm on the down stream side had filled the space under the culvert, and up part of its sides, with loosely compacted fine material. The culvert would have been at least 20 cm above the stream bed. Sediment washed onto the top of the culvert from the cuttings on both sides has built up the northern side of the culvert and also the top 5 cm of the track surface. It is possible that the layer to 23 cm below the track surface may also be sediment.

The three layers of earth on top of the culvert represents soil removed from the cuttings on both sides of the culvert. It is likely that the sequence of material on the culvert is the reverse of the sequence encountered during the excavations of the cuttings. The distinct stratum on the culvert suggests that the culvert deck was first constructed before the cuttings

were made so that the layers of soil were transferred directly onto the top of the culvert in the same sequence that they were excavated from the cuttings.

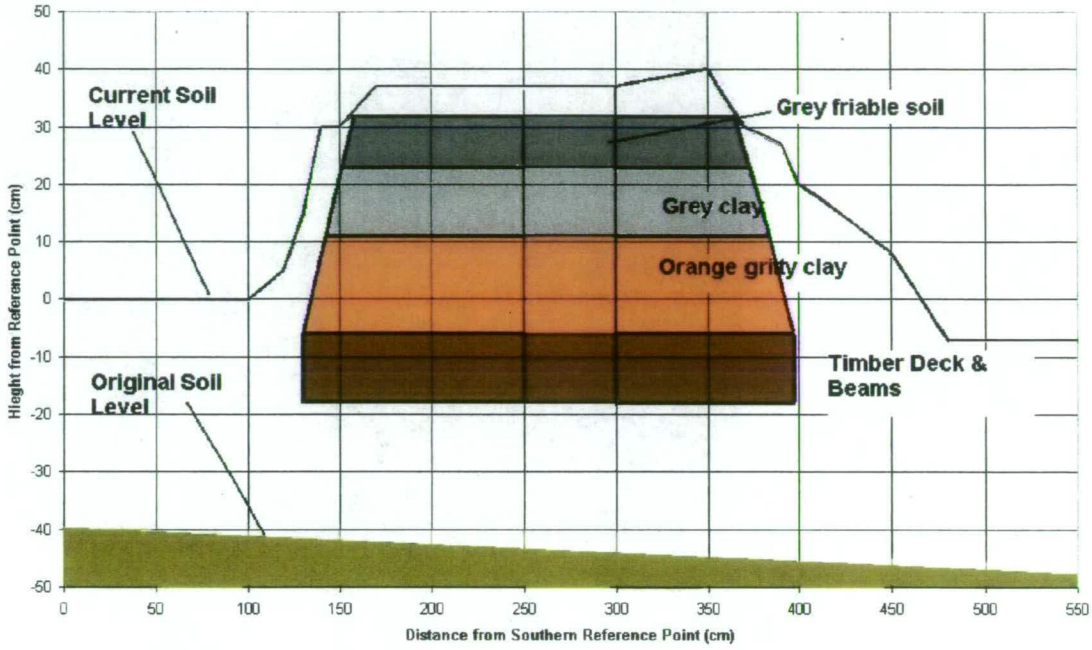

Figure 5.29 - Possible Arrangement of Culvert as Constructed

5.2.3. Rocky Benched Track

a) Setting

The line of the track passes through a broad shallow valley containing Lake Curran and starts to round the southern end of a high ridge. The majority of this country is button grass and no track formation has been found. The line of the track from the southern end of the ridge has been recorded in mineral leases prepared in the 1890s but no features were located until about 250 metres up the side of a small creek gully.

The track is on the eastern side of a small gully and runs north towards the head of the gully. There is thick vegetation cover about 50 cm high but few trees on the line of the track.

Figure 5.30 - Line of Track, Viewed from South (Brown 2007)

b) Examination

The grade of the track, for the 400 metres where it was located up the gully, varies between 10 and 12%. The track is 2 metres wide on the walking surface and is built level from rocks. Much of the general area is rocky quartz scree with the thick scrub cover.

Figure 5.31 – Slope of Hill Immediately Above Track (Brown 2007)

The slope of the ground immediately over the inner edge of the track is angled more steeply then the rest of the slope, refer to Figure 5.31. The track surface is level and made up of irregular stones between 5 to 10 cm.

Figure 5.32 - Track Surface Viewed from Above, Track Runs Across Photograph (Brown 2007)

Figure 5.33 - Downhill Edge of Track Viewed From West (Brown 2007)

The outer edge of the track falls way steeply and is made up of stones between 10 to 20 cm, see Figure 5.33 and 5.34.

Figure 5.34 - Detail of Downhill Edge of Track (Brown 2007)

Figure 5.35 - Detail of Outer Edge of Track Viewed from Above (Brown 2007)

The different sizes of stones for the track surface and outer edge are shown in Figure 5.35. A few stones were removed from the track surface to examine the substructure of the track. This showed that the small stones continued below the track surface. In addition, the grey

patina on the stones on the surface of the track was not observed on any of the stones under the track surface.

Figure 5.36 - Detail of Track Surface and Shallow Excavation, Viewed From Above (Brown 2007)

c) Interpretation

The track was built up from rocks which were present in the scree slope through which the track passes. Large rocks were used to build up the outer edge of the track and the body of the track was built up with smaller rocks. These rocks were largely taken from the inner edge of the track so the track is partially cut into the side of the hill. The rocks present under the surface of the track have no surface discolouration indicating that they were either previously covered by other material, i.e. excavated, or they have been broken down.

6. DISCUSSION

8.3 Limitations of the Survey

All the possible corduroy locations on the plain near Lake Ayr were not examined in detail as a small plain between hillocks 1 and 2 was not probed.

The excavation of the culvert examined only one location and did not strip back the edges of the culvert or determine the depth to the original stream bed.

The rocky benched track near Lake Windermere was examined in detail at only one location. The profile of the track was not measured accurately and no excavations were undertaken at this location.

8.4 Possible Other Artefacts

The route of the track at Lake Windermere has not been completely delineated as the track was lost for some distance and the later review of mineral surveys has revealed that this section may be followed more closely and more track located.

While the search for the corduroy was conducted quite thoroughly it is possible that more corduroy may exist along the line of the track. There was no probing done between hillocks 2 and 3.

8.5 Threats

Currently there are few threats to these areas. Erosion by walkers has been controlled by the installation of boardwalks. Inadvertent damage due to track works appears to have been overcome by a more sensitive form of installing boardwalk. While further decay of the cords will occur it is now likely to be quite slow.

9. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITE ASSESSMENT

The assessment of these sites from the previous study remains unchanged in that; the Mole Creek Track in general, and the site examined in particular, have considerable significance in their associations with development of routes to the West Coast of Tasmania, providing an example, the only substantially extant example, of the Public Works Department tracks cut in the late 19th century. They also have important information about how these tracks were constructed. The track has some significance in its aesthetic qualities.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Further work will add to the results of the work conducted to date.

1) Determine the profile of the ditched track location to provide further information on its construction method which appears to be as a causeway.

2) Probe the ground between hillocks 1 and 2 to locate any further corduroy.

3) Accurately determine the profile of the culvert by stripping back vegetation and sediment.

4) Measure the profile of the Mole Creek Track in a number of locations to determine the consistency of construction width.

9. PERSONNEL

Author – Peter Brown, C/O School of History and Classics, University of Tasmania,
Launceston

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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